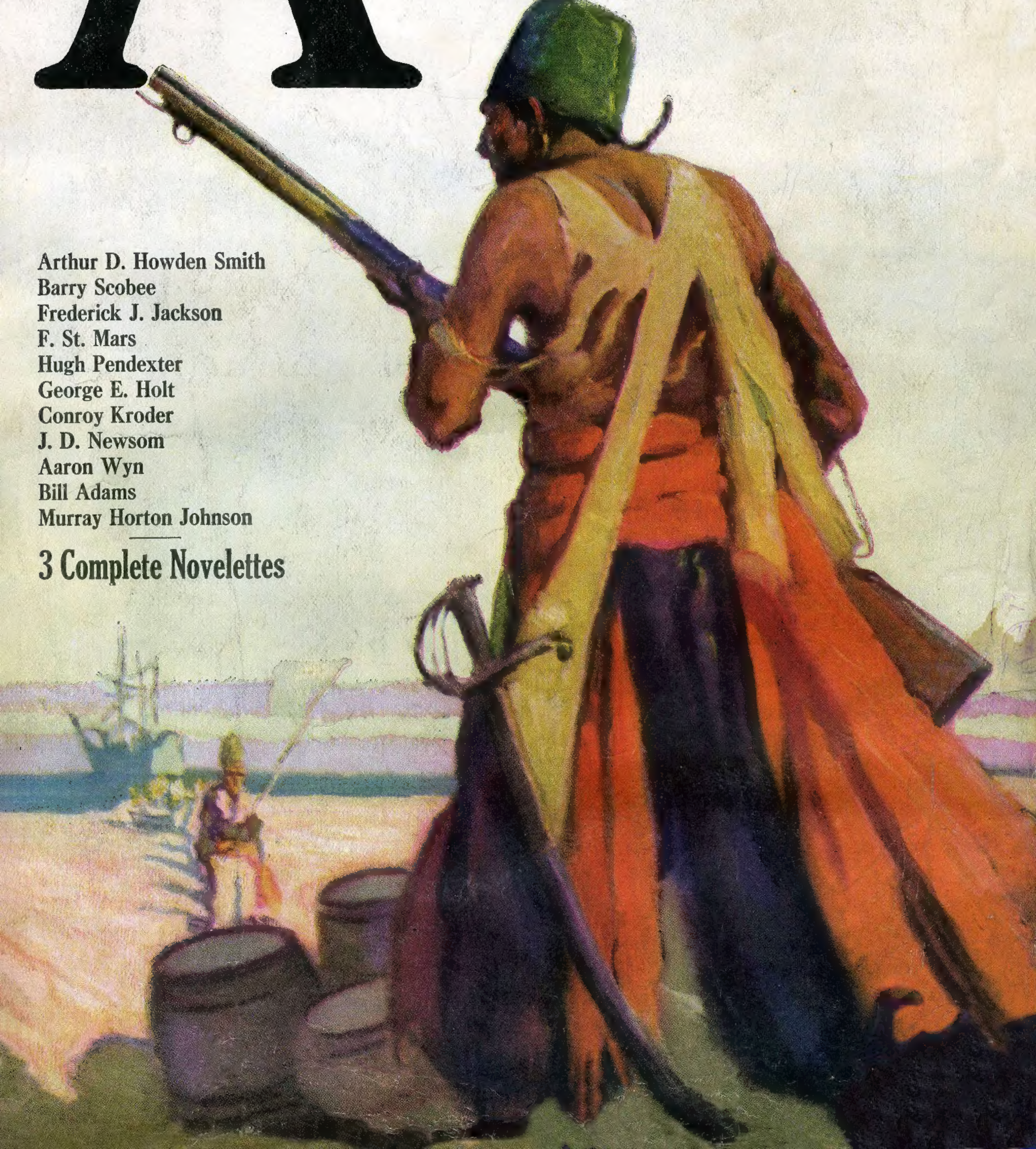
PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

FEBRUARY
10th
1924
25c

Adventure



Arthur D. Howden Smith
Barry Scobee
Frederick J. Jackson
F. St. Mars
Hugh Pendexter
George E. Holt
Conroy Kroder
J. D. Newsom
Aaron Wyn
Bill Adams
Murray Horton Johnson

3 Complete Novelettes

A Queer Human Kink

WHAT strange bundles of contradictions we all are! We tell each other earnestly that health is one of the most precious things in life—and yet what do we do to keep it, to protect it? It's a queer kink in human nature, isn't it, to *think* one way and *act* just the opposite!

The Harm of Self-Diagnosis

You know how idle people love to talk over symptoms and recklessly recommend all sorts of cure-all remedies.

What a tremendous amount of harm is done by attempts at self-diagnosis! Here is an example: A prominent man made up his mind that he was eating too much meat and heroically put himself on a strict diet. Sometime later, he was taken ill. His doctor astonished him by saying that while most men of his age would have benefited by doing what he had done, his case was an exception and that *lack* of meat caused the trouble.

How Long Do You Want To Live?

Just so long as you are well and happy? Good!—but suppose you keep right on living long after you have ceased to be well!

Stop right here and think about it.

You would not treat your car as you treat yourself. You constantly test the steering gear and the brake bands. You make sure that bolts are tight. You listen to the motor for the faintest "knock". You are careful about the fuel mixture—it must not be too rich nor too lean or the engine will not pull properly.

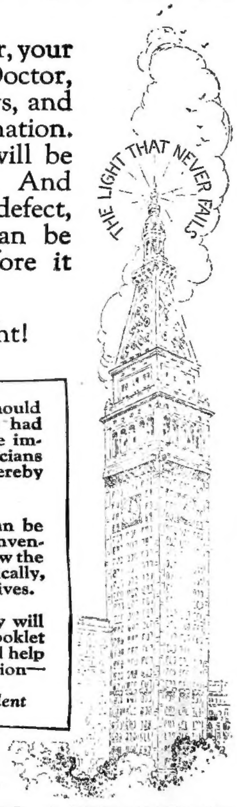
But do you know whether the food—the "fuel mixture"—that you give your own body is too rich or too lean? You can replace parts of your car, but you can't replace a worn-out heart, an abused stomach, an over-worked liver or frayed nerves.

Years Alone Do Not Age Us

The physical changes ascribed to age may be due to poison, infection, wrong food or emotional strain, principally worry. And these things are in large degree under our own control.

Go to your wisest adviser, your own good friend, your Doctor, within the next few days, and have a *thorough* examination. If you are well, you will be glad to have his O. K. And if he finds some slight defect, be thankful that it can be corrected in time—before it becomes serious.

Begin the New Year right!


THE LIGHT THAT NEVER FAILS

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company believes thoroughly in the value of the annual physical examination. All of the 8,000 employees of the Home Office are carefully examined each year; also its field force of nearly 20,000 employees. These examinations are carefully followed up and those employees who show impairments receive particular attention. The result of such intensive care is very gratifying.

During the past ten years, the Company has arranged for the examination of various classes of its policyholders and is extending this privilege every year.

In the first 6,000 policyholders examined, a remarkable lowering of mortality occurred. Instead of 303 deaths in the five and one-half years subsequent to the examination, only 217 occurred—a saving of 28 per cent. in the expected mortality.

It is not difficult to understand why this should happen. Many of the policyholders who had been examined did not know that they were impaired. They took the advice of the physicians seriously; they followed instructions and thereby averted serious trouble.

The great waste of life that still prevails can be prevented. If people will make an annual inventory of their physical condition and will follow the advice of trained physicians and live hygienically, they will add whole years to their working lives.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company will be glad to mail you, without charge, a booklet entitled, "An Ounce of Prevention". It will help you in guarding that most precious possession—your health.

HALEY FISKE, *President*

Published by

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY-NEW YORK

Biggest in the World, More Assets, More Policyholders, More Insurance in force, More new Insurance each year

Adventure
Registered in U.S. Patent Office
February 10, 1924
Vol·XLV·No·1
V.E. Pyles

Published Three Times a Month by The Ridgway Company

J. H. GANNON, President
C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York, N. Y.
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $6.00 in advance
Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents

Foreign postage, $3.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 90 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1924, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. Entered at Stationers' Hall, London, England.

The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for February 10th, 1924, Issue

Cassidy Troubles Trouble *A Complete Novelette* . . . . **Frederick J. Jackson** 3
Texas—he didn't want it, but it wouldn't let him alone.

One Night and the Morning *An Off-the-Trail Story** . . . **Aaron Wyn** 46
Rio harbor—Norse blood.

Slants on Life *It Is ——Poor Form* . . . . . . **Bill Adams** 51

The Edged Tool . . . . **F. St. Mars** 52
England—an American wild-cat turned loose in pheasant coverts.

Porto Bello Gold *A Five-Part Story Part I* . . . . . **Arthur D. Howden Smith** 59
New York Colony—*Long John Silver's* tale.

The Undesirable Svenson . . . . **Conroy Kroder** 91
Old San Francisco—he was given twenty-four hours to leave the city.

Marty's Bones *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . . **J. D. Newsom** 103
South Seas—the prize in the Kanaka ghost-house.

The Long Knives *A Five-Part Story Conclusion* . . . . **Hugh Pendexter** 117
Ohio frontier—"Mad Anthony" Wayne strikes the Indians at last.

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

The Blue Vault . . . . **Murray Horton Johnson** 149
The West—*Gleason* was in charge of a huge payroll.

The Story of the First Scribe . . . . **George E. Holt** 152
Morocco—the seals, the jewels—and the Master of the *Djinoon.*

White Men Stick Together *A Complete Novelette* . . . **Barry Scobee** 156
The Philippines—the match to touch off a native insurrection.

The Camp-Fire A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers 174

Camp-Fire Stations 180

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 180

Old Songs That Men Have Sung 180

Ask Adventure 181
A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising sixty-two geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons Past and Present, Salt and Fresh Water Fishing, Tropical Forestry, Aviation, Army Matters, United States and Foreign; and American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal.

Lost Trails 189

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . **V. E. Pyles**

Cover Design . . . . **H. C. Murphy**

Three Complete Novelettes

EVIL luck pursued the soldier who took three lights from one match. "It isn't superstition, just common sense," said *Spike* as *Simmons* departed into the night after committing this heinous army crime. By daybreak *Simmons* found himself in a town held by Germans where every move meant death to some one; and by night he wished he had never seen a match. "THREE LIGHTS FROM A MATCH," a complete novelette of the World War, by Leonard H. Nason, in the next issue.

CIRCLE CITY claimed old *Jim Gordon* as its prize fool. Its judgment was confirmed when he set out into the Yukon after gold with a half-wit and as rough a gang of cutthroats as could be assembled for a crew. "Even if there is gold they'll take it away from him," argued Circle City. If an outsider could have looked in on that mad camp on the Chandelar he might have agreed. Read "CASSIAR GOLD," a complete novelette by Wilbur Watkins in the next issue.

TOM MACY and *Jim Kitchel* were friends until *Timeteo,* the half-caste, reported his discovery of a rich pearl bed. Then the friends became enemies; each in his own boat daring perilous seas, shipwreck and monster sharks in order to be first to reach the coveted pearls. "RIVALS OF THE REEF," a complete novelette of the South Seas, by J. Allan Dunn, in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Adventure is out on the 10th, 20th and last day of each month

Adventure

February
10
1924

Vol. XLV.
No. 1

Cassidy Troubles Trouble

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Frederick J. Jackson

Author of "Scars of Conceit," "Stepsons of Law," etc.

OBSERVE Mr. "Slivers" Cassidy, top cow-hand, seeker of action and finder of trouble. For seven months and three days he had been foreman of the Bar Z Bar outfit, and seven months was too long to stay on one job—too long, that is, for any one with an itching hoof like Cassidy's.

He sat on a rickety top bar of the eight-foot corral fence, morosely rolling a cigaret, now and then turning a sour gaze on the winding path of dust—by courtesy called a road—which led toward Cazadero. The owner of the Bar Z Bar was three days overdue, and those three days of uncertain waiting had irked Cassidy more than the seven months of hard riding and sometimes desperate fighting he had just put in. For several months, despite the action furnished by the task of cleaning up on a gang of rustlers, Cassidy felt that the world had not treated him right.

From a hip pocket of his overalls he pulled out a dog-eared, battered pamphlet entitled: "How to Learn to Sing at Home in Ten Lessons." The sourness faded from his eyes. He turned to lesson number one and began practicing the scales.

For ten or twelve years as an itinerant cowpuncher Cassidy had been content to burst into alleged song with what gifts nature had *not* endowed him. But since attaining the age of thirty-three and the dignity of a foreman's job he had sought to improve his singing to accord with his new status. Therefore hopefully he had sent five dollars to Chicago in reply to this advertisement:

Copyright, 1923, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved.

ANY ONE CAN BECOME A SWEET SINGER AT HOME BY PRACTICING THE TEN SHORT LESSONS IN PROF. WILKINSON'S COURSE. Surprize your friends; delight your loved ones. TEN LESSONS COMPLETE FOR ONLY FIVE DOLLARS.

A badly printed twenty-page pamphlet had been received for his money. The ten lessons—complete—occupied six pages of it. The other pages contained the words—in fine print—of perhaps fifty songs. Cassidy felt that he had obtained his money's worth. Most of the songs were new to him—therefore a delight. He did not know their tunes, but that made no difference; he used the same tune for all of them.

Twice he butchered the scales, and, each time, a collie dozing in the shade of the rails opened a protesting eye. Cassidy finally started to sing. The collie arose, shook himself and trotted straight up wind, casting several lingering accusing glances back over his shoulder.

"The insulting pup!" scowled Cassidy. "He ain't used to improved singing."

Again he started his doleful, nasal wail, in a paraphrased version that was meant to apply to Tommy Dunbarton, his employer:

"You'll rue it, my boy, now mind what I say,
Don't spend all your money and time in that way;
There's no one but rustlers that ride about so,
We beg of you, Tommy, don't go.
We're feeble and o-old, your cowboys and me;
And kind to us a-all you ever should be.
To whisky shops, billiards and cards bid *adieu*,
We beg of you, Tommy, don't go-o-o."

Among the foot-hills to the north he spotted a dust cloud. Then two dabs of yellow. In strong sunlight the two buckskin mustangs hitched to Tommy Dunbarton's buckboard were easily recognized at a distance. Swiftly they approached.

"Tryin' to make up for three days in the last mile and a half," mused Cassidy, grinning despite himself.

His employer finally pulled up at the corral, leaped to the ground and approached. Cassidy never moved.

"Hello, Slivers, how's things?"

"Rotten! You've been drunk again for three days, I bet."

"Uh-uh!" Dunbarton grinned.

He recognized the symptoms. When Cassidy got personally insulting it was a sure sign that he wanted to quit.

"I stayed over in Yucca City. Big rustling trial on up there."

Yucca City was nearly one hundred miles from the Bar Z Bar. Dunbarton's mustangs had covered this distance since morning of the day before.

"Gimme my time," demanded Cassidy. "I've been havin' too much trouble around here. I'm gonna take a vacation from trouble."

Dunbarton laughed.

"I notice yuh used up all the local supply of trouble before yuh decided to quit. Where yuh headin' for?"

"Anywhere away from trouble. I'm gonna take a quiet pasear to look over the country and see if it's still all there."

"Well, keep away from Yucca. And from "Peaceful" Pete Newton. He's startin' sure 'nuff trouble up there. You sure make me laugh when yuh want a vacation from trouble. You'll be like old Pop Crossett down in Pinkerton County. He drove a stage over the same road for twenty years without a vacation. He hollered and got one. Then he spent every day of his vacation ridin' on the stage, watchin' his relief driver pour 'em over the same old road. You're like old Pop." With that, Dunbarton stalked away to the ranch-house.

Cassidy unhitched the mustangs, turned them into the corral and then proceeded to saddle his own horse. By the time he was ready to travel, Dunbarton had the pay check ready.

They shook hands and grinned at each other.

"You'll be back before next round-up, I suppose?"

"Sure, you'll need me."

"Betcha a fat steer against a sick horse-fly that yuh head for Yucca," offered Dunbarton.

"What'll make a horse-fly sick?"

"Your singin', as quick as anything."

"Aw-w—" in weak protest. "Well, I'll pick out that fat steer when I get back. When I do," he added cautiously. "But I'm sure enough keepin' away from trouble. S'long!"

He gave his horse a hint of the spurs.

Dunbarton was laughing as he turned back to the house.

The laughter was knowing. It irritated Cassidy. Yucca City? A rustling trial spelled potential trouble.

"Not for me," decided Cassidy, as he headed for Cazadero to cash his check.

Cazadero was on the road to Yucca City,

but this was not responsible for Cassidy's finally taking the Yucca road out of town. With possibilities of trouble within riding distance it was inevitable that Cassidy, footloose, would show up to look it over from the sidelines. And despite his innocent intentions, looking it over inevitably would mean his mixing into it.

II

IT WAS about eleven-thirty one morning when Cassidy rode into Yucca City and finally allowed his horse to plunge its nuzzle into a watering-trough. The trough was in front of the court-house.

He had passed by a dozen saloons and had curbed the desire of his horse to stop in front of each one in turn. Saloons were not included in Cassidy's proposed itinerary. Saloons were where most trouble started, and he was still filled with the good resolve to avoid trouble. Therefore the court-house; that was safe.

At the hitching-rails around the court-house and for a block on each side were tethered scores of saddle-horses, with numerous buckboards, wagons and buggies. It was evident that court was still in session and that some trial of great interest was in progress. A court-room was a nice quiet place; he would find no trouble there. So he walked up the brick steps and through a corridor until he located the right room.

He stopped and peered in, as twelve men entered from a doorway in the rear. There was a sudden hush within. Amid the silence as the members of the jury took their seats Cassidy tiptoed into the room. Squeaky boots and clanking rowels made futile his attempt at a silent entry, but only a few of the two hundred-odd spectators turned for even a brief glance at the late comer. Cassidy slid into a seat near the door.

The foreman of the jury arose and loudly announced that they had reached a verdict.

"Not guilty!"

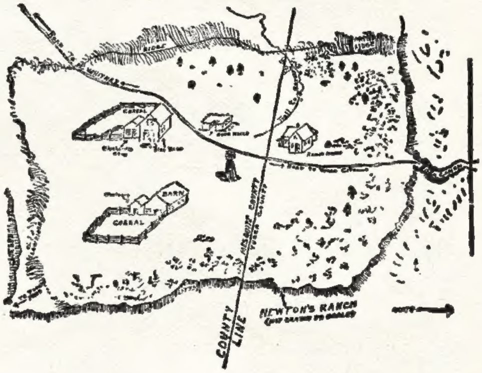
"——!" thought Cassidy, in disgust, "it's all over!"

But he was wrong.

PEACEFUL PETE NEWTON owned what was known as the Newton ranch and the registered N brand which adorned the sides of some thousands of cattle.

Following the jury's verdict, Pete promptly leaped to his feet and began a speech which in the Southwest is still regarded as a classic. He announced to all and sundry that an honest man in Yucca County had as much chance as a ham-strung hare at a hounds' convention. He seemed to derive much satisfaction from calling the sheriff a dirty crook, the county judge the same kind of a liar and politician, and then repeating the same word several more times in getting a lot of things off his chest.

Pete may have lacked versatility in choosing adjectives, but lacked nothing in force of delivery and earnestness when it came to telling the world just what he thought. And he had started things by announcing publicly that he was a peaceful man. That was Pete's way, every time.



By this time, Cassidy was sitting on the edge of his bench, wondering when cold lead would start to fly, for Pete's words, to say the least, were highly provocative.

But Pete finished his little say, dropped back into a chair and calmly haggled off more than a man-sized chew of tobacco, leaving it strictly up to the insulted officials to do what they pleased about it. Yucca County was primitive and, ordinarily, Pete's scandalous language would have meant gun-play.

He had the game cheated, however, by carrying no gun. Yucca County was tough—awful tough—but not tough enough to fail to hold inviolate a point of ethics to the effect that an unarmed man must not be shot—at least before witnesses. Also it might be mentioned that several of Pete's friends had stationed themselves at strategic points in the court-room, friends who carried guns openly and knew how to use them.

The law against carrying firearms into a court-room was not being enforced.

The sheriff swallowed the hard names applied to him. He blinked a few times, gulped, and swallowed his chewing-tobacco, which had the effect of mixing his emotions beyond immediate repair.

The judge turned a choleric red and tried to figure out how much he dared fine Pete for contempt of court. He decided finally to let Pete remain peaceful. Pete already had too much contempt for the court and was rarely gifted when it came to mixing oratory and insults. No matter how much the amount of the fine, Pete would be sure to get his money's worth.

A case-hardened bailiff, filled with pompous authority, attempted to argue with Pete, but about thirty-seven words caused him to back away. The thirty-seven were among a number of words Pete had been saving up. Of this the judge took particular notice and decided he had been wise to refrain from plastering a fine on the irate cattleman. He tried to placate him.

"Now, Mr. Newton," he began, "I am certain that there has been some mistake. The court——"

"You're danged right there's been a mistake!" interjected Pete. "A mistake was made when you were elected. The foreman and the whole danged jury is a mistake. They're almost as bad as you and the sheriff. The whole bunch of you is a combination tighter than the skin on a bloated calf. That booze-swillin', sheep-herdin' jury takes two minutes to bring in a verdict of 'not guilty' after I've brought a dead open-and-shut case into court. The whole gang of you smells worse than your rotten cooperative packing-house. I've told you less than half of what I think. I've called the jury a bunch of sheep-herders. I'm a peaceful man, but if any of you crave to see me outside, I'll be *waiting!*"

With that, Pete contemptuously desecrated the clean floor with an ounce of tobacco-juice, took plenty of time about glaring in turn at everybody he did not like, then started out of the court-room.

Pete was nearly fifty years of age and probably weighed less than one hundred and fifty pounds with his boots on, but it was noticeable that none of the insulted ones followed him. They knew Pete. He believed himself every time he declared he was peaceful. No one else did. He lived up to his motto to the extent of carrying no gun, but from there on was as full of possibilities as a stick of high percentage dynamite.

Six men arose in different parts of the court room and followed Pete. On the thigh of each hung a Colt, in the eye of each was a light that promised no good to any one seeking trouble. They were six men from Pete's ranch, headed by "Inky" O'Day, the foreman. Inky was red-haired, very, and lived up to it. The other five were picked men—picked by Inky.

The foreman, just ahead of his men, was perhaps fifteen feet behind his employer when Cassidy uncoupled himself from his seat and cut in ahead of the foreman. Inky scowled and crowded on the heels of the lanky stranger. Cassidy stopped abruptly. Inky bumped into him. Cassidy never even turned. He continued again to follow Pete. Two of Inky's younger cowboys made certain that their guns were loose in their holsters. Unaware of this, Pete gazed straight ahead until he reached the corridor.

Here, he stopped to size up the man who had followed him.

"I don't know where *you* figger in this," he snapped out, "but it's all the same to me. How'll you have it—regular or *ad lib?*"

"What's this *ad lib* stuff?" inquired Cassidy, grinning.

Pete hesitated, for the tall stranger's grin was infectious.

"*Ad lib* is French for rough and tumble," he explained, less belligerently. "She's a good word."

"Oh, my gosh!" laughed Cassidy, and then laughed some more, which had the effect of making Pete wonder if he had been taken for a prize fool or a rare humorist.

"Stranger," announced Pete—Pete always announced things; he never said them in any other way—"I'm a peaceful man, but when a stranger laughs at me like that, either I've got an explanation comin' or he's got somethin' else comin'."

"You get the explanation," smiled Cassidy. "It's this way: I've been in this county since yesterday and haven't had a drink. You're the first man I've seen that I want to drink with. And right away you want to fight me. That's the joke."

Forgotten was Cassidy's intention to avoid trouble. He wanted to get acquainted with Pete—perhaps merely to find out what made the wheels go round.

"Well—" Pete grinned uncertainly—"I'm kinda puzzled why yuh picked on me."

Pete had dropped the greater part of his hostile air; the stranger seemed to be a regular human being, but it wouldn't do to take chances—yet. Show me! That was Pete's attitude.

"I didn't pick *on* you. I *picked* you. I sure appreciate genius. I got into court too late to hear the first three or four acts, but what I heard was enough to cheer up the whole day for me. When it comes to spoutin' words I sure admire your technique and your nerve. Any man who can make a judge and a sheriff, to say nothing of a jury weighing about a ton on the hoof, take what you handed 'em is a man I want to set 'em up for. I don't gather yet what it was all about, but I reckon that you don't get along with a lot of folks."

Pete accepted the stranger as a friend.

"Shucks! They ain't folks. They're two-laigged coyotes. And if what they call yuh at home is a secret, what name do yuh happen to be travelin' under?"

"Me! My name's Cassidy—Slivers Cassidy for short. I been foreman on the Bar Z Bar over in Cazadero County. I'm sort of stoppin' over to see the country. I'm taking the long way round. I'm not goin' anywhere and I got lots of time to get there."

Pete relaxed from his caution and stuck out a sinewy hand.

"Gosh! I know all about you. I'm Pete Newton."

"Yeh! I guessed it," grinned Cassidy.

"Yuh wanta excuse what yuh might have heard in court. I'm a peaceful man, but this dirty bunch of thieves and politicians get me sorta riled at times. Some day I'm gonna lose my temper."

He turned to his foreman.

"Inky, here's an *hombre* you'll like. Be proud to shake with Slivers Cassidy. Tommy Dunbarton says he's just as lazy and crazy as you are."

"By golly, Cassidy," affirmed Inky, "I sure am glad to meet up with yuh. You're plumb peaceful, I hope, just like my boss. I sure cotton to peaceful men. I'm peaceful myself."

"Yeah! Like a wildcat," explained Pete. "But why waste time? Let's go."

"At the corral, in one hour," Inky instructed the cowboys, who lost no time in disappearing.

Cassidy, Inky and Pete headed for the nearest pair of swinging doors.

After three rounds of drinks, Cassidy hooked one elbow on the bar and questioned Pete.

"What's it all about? I didn't get into court till you began tossing harrowin' truths around plumb regardless."

"Set 'em up again," ordered Pete, then turned to Cassidy and began his tale of woe.

"The whole trouble is that I wouldn't join the Yucca County Cattlemen's Association. I own less than a thousand acres in Yucca County—the biggest part of my holdings is over in Mesquite. I got about eight thousand acres scattered around. This holds all the water on a sixty thousand acre range—makes it my range."

Cassidy nodded understandingly.

"I won't join the association because it's a bunch of thieves and rustlers—and I told 'em so. That naturally didn't please 'em any, and I've stood for a lot since then.

"And the association owns a meat packing-house here in Yucca City, one of these cooperative things. The county judge and the sheriff own stock in it——"

"Why in —— didn't ya think of that before ya tried to get justice in that court?" demanded Inky. "Why——"

"Inky, shut up!" interrupted Pete. "Who's tellin' this?"

"You're supposed to be, but ain't," was Inky's come-back.

"Now, Inky, I'm a peaceful man, but don't you——"

"I won't," promised Inky. "Once was plenty."

"Then shut up!" With a glare.

"After I told the association where tuh head in," continued Pete, "they started driftin' their steers on tuh my range. Reckon there was three-four thousand head there that didn't carry my brand—J Up and J Downs and Double Diamonds mostly. They was usin' up too much of my water, so I cut out about a couple of thousand head, gathered 'em on the county line, got 'em all excited and then stampeded 'em with a few sticks of dynamite."

"She sure was a real stampede," affirmed Inky. "Some of them shorthorns wound up about fifty miles from where we started 'em—more or less."

"Inky! Who's——"

"You are. But I engineered that stampede. And she sure was a lulu."

"She was, at that," acknowledged Pete. "I'm a peaceful man. I was peaceful then, but this fire-eater argued me into tryin' to clear the range a bit."

"I didn't have to argue him into it!" snorted Inky. "It was his idea."

"Inky! Shut up!" warned Pete, with another glare.

He turned.

"Bartender, set 'em up!"

Pause. They crooked their elbows.

"And last Fall was a dry season," resumed Pete, wiping his mustache on his sleeve. "Water gettin' scarcer and scarcer, till I got afraid there wouldn't be enough to see my own stock through, much less the couple or three thousand extra head on my range where them danged thieves had deliberately driven 'em in. There was plenty of water on their own ranges. I fenced off my biggest spring, when things finally got kinda desperate, and every day some of my boys would go up, open the gates and then work like niggers to keep them outside brands from using up the water.

"Right here is where yuh get a line on the association's tactics. Mind you, this wasn't in Yucca County a-tall—about twelve miles from the line—but one night some of them miscreants dumped a whoppin' big dose of cyanide into the spring. I lost about fifty white-faces before the boys got on that somethin' was wrong. Inky wanted to go on the war-path, but I'm a peaceful man."

"Sure ya are," Inky blurted out. "But what'd ya do? What'd ya do?"

"Why, my outfit herded my stock away from there. Yuh understand, of course, that kept 'em pretty busy for a while, so we really couldn't help it if about a hundred head of the association cattle got to the poisoned water before one of us thought to close the gates.

"That was rough on the cattle, but it was a sorta object lesson to the association. And right along since then they've been pickin' on me. They've bumped off one of my cow-punchers and they've been rustlin' right and left. Last round-up I was more'n six hundred head shy. I know where they went—through the association packin'-house. But I can't prove it. I had a detective working along some angles, for instance, tryin' to trace some of the shipments of green hides. They'd either worked over the brand or bought the detective—maybe both. But I've wired El Paso for an honest one."

"Aw, I told ya all along that that feller was crooked. He didn't look right to me," declared Inky.

"Well, Inky, if you're so danged smart, why don't yuh do somethin'?"

"You won't let me," was the retort.

"I'm a peaceful man. Inky has the idea that the only way to get results is to hire some of the old-time gun-fighters and start a war."

"Old-timers—nawthin'! I can get yuh a bunch of young hellions that'll furnish war enough. I've got our bunk-house gang weeded down to a pretty bunch of fighters. We'll raid that closed packin-house and *get* the evidence."

"If any," amended Pete. "And what good'll it do yuh to get it. That trial today——"

"That's what I've been wondering about," said Cassidy.

"Inky may not be a lot of things, but I can't accuse him of not being conscientious. Every night he kept a couple of the boys out on the range—he took his turn with the rest of 'em. One night he got results. He rode in and woke us up. The whole bunk-house gang and me and my son rode out right *pronto*. There was a little shootin', but shootin' in the dark doesn't get yuh much. Anyway, we caught three rustlers red-handed. Our boys roped 'em. There was about six or seven rustlers altogether a-tryin' to persuade about a hundred of my beeves that they belonged to somebody else. These three were Double Diamond men—on the payroll of 'Stingy' Nettle.

"Inky wanted to string up the three we caught, but I'm a peaceful man. I didn't want to start a feud. So we delivered the three rustlers to the sheriff—delivered 'em right at the jail door. Their trial's been takin' all week. I had six witnesses besides myself. I didn't have a doubt about gettin' a conviction. The judge instructed the jury. His words sounded queer; he spoke a lot about reasonable doubt, considering the evidence as given, something about prejudice, bias and malice and a lot of other things. It was a Yucca County jury. It stayed out about two minutes and then brought in that verdict.

"That's when I lost my temper. I'm a peaceful man, but that verdict drove me too far."

"Why in the sky-blue-pink blazes didn't ya let us string 'em up in the first place?'

This is a censored version of Inky's question.

"Wouldn't 'a' been right, Inky. I'm a peaceful man and believe in the law."

"You're crazy!" jeered Inky. "You're believin' in somethin' that ain't. To get any law we'll have to take it into our own hands. Leave it to me—and I'll get results."

"Another round!"

Cassidy motioned to the bartender.

"And as for Mr. O'Day, here——"

"Who's he?" grinned the foreman. "If ya mean me, my name's Inky. Comin' or goin', drunk or otherwise, that's my name. When somebody calls me *Mister* I get suspicious."

"You win, Inky. Say, she's sure a beautiful mess, the way things stand on your range. I'm liable to come out and look it over. That's all, though. I'm stayin' out of trouble. But if I can give any advice that yuh'll want to take—well, that won't get me mixed up in trouble. Will it?" He directed the question at Pete.

"No-o," drawled Pete smiling quietly. "If you say it won't, I'll take your word for it. He goes on the payroll, Inky, as long as he sticks around. Same wages as yours."

"I'm a peaceful man," he continued, warming up with the liquor in him, "and Inky says I put the brakes on to everything. But there's times when a peaceful man should deliberately do the wrong thing. I'm gonna do it. I'm not goin' back to the ranch for a while. I gotta make a business trip to El Paso, anyway, so I might as well make it now. I'm gonna let Inky stay as peaceful as he can for me while I'm gone. If Cassidy goes back to the ranch with yuh, Inky, —— help the ranch. But I wash my hands of everything. There'll be blood all over the moon and surroundin' territory when I get back, but my conscience'll be clear."

"Boss, you're puttin' a lot of responsibility on to me," grinned Inky. "And you'd oughta done it sooner!"

III

SO IT happened that about an hour later, Slivers Cassidy rode with Inky O'Day and five cowboys on their way to the Newton ranch, distant sixteen miles from Yucca City. Somewhere inside of Cassidy were seven drinks and a desire to sing. The desire was filled by sheer lung power, not by harmony, until Inky grinned and remarked:

"And to think I've been told that I'm the world's worst singer. I sure hope ya stick around a while, Cassidy, so I can prove that I ain't."

"Sure I will. And better men than you have tried to insult my good voice, so you can't hurt my feelings—not when I've got seven drinks in me. How's this one?

"A Mex from Saltillo went courting one day,
He carried a Spanish guitar,
His hair was all greased up and perfumed, they say,
But he sang through his nose with catarrh——"

"Just a minute—*just* a minute," insisted Inky. "You know that song is downright ee-moral. We're just a bunch of innocent young cow-wrastlers, and we mustn't have ee-moral songs sung at us."

"Innocent!" scoffed Cassidy. "So am I. You can stand it if I can. I'm gonna spout all nineteen verses.

"His pants were all tight like the skin on a drum,
And, oh gosh! he was awfully fat,
He——"

"*Listen* " yelled Inky, pulling up his horse.

In his voice was such an imperative note that Cassidy reined in and mechanically listened.

"Some one's comin' —— bent," voiced one of the cowboys.

"That ain't what I heard—or what I thought I heard," explained Inky. "But it fits in."

As he finished speaking there came several scattering reports of firearms.

"That's it," said Inky. "What's comin' off?"

"Colts," offered one of the cowboys.

"Two of those shots were from rifles," contended Cassidy.

"There's a whole gang of them shooting. They're giving —— to somebody," continued the cowboy oracle.

"Gosh, if you know all that all alone by yourself you ought to go into business as a fortune-teller," grinned Cassidy.

"We'll wait here," Inky put in. "The feller that's comin' is just around the turn. I'll bet a whole gang of rustlers is after him, or it's a gang after a rustler."

This point on the road was not more than five miles from Newton's ranch-house. The road, winding through a wide dry creek bed, was heavily screened on both sides by brush which had grown to a height of perhaps ten feet. A ribbon of dust six feet wide, haphazardly following lines of least resistance through thickets of vine-overgrown willows and cottonwoods was all the road amounted to.

Around the nearest turn, perhaps fifty yards distant, and heralded in advance by dust arising above the brush, popped a rider. Both he and his gray mount were coated with dust, through which on the horse ran streaks of sweat. The rider caught sight of the men awaiting him, pulled up suddenly and swerved his animal to the right into the brush, through which for several seconds it could be heard crashing and plunging.

"He was bareback, by golly!" exclaimed Cassidy. "And he sure didn't like our looks. I never saw a quicker turn-in for cover in my life."

"That was Bill Newton!" blurted out Inky. "He was on our gray stallion. He's the only one who can ride it bareback. He's Pete's son," he explained to Cassidy. "Come on. He's in trouble."

Inky's mount leaped forward at a touch of the spurs.

The others followed, but had not yet reached the point where the stallion had left the road when from ahead came a confused drumming of dust-muffled hoofs. Through the heavy dust screen around the turn, not thirty yards away, two riders burst into sight. They were masked with bandana handkerchiefs, perhaps in order to eat as little dust as possible.

And they, like Bill Newton, evinced sudden alarm at sight of the seven riders. Swiftly, after yelling a warning to the riders coming behind, they spurred their horses into the brush in the direction opposite to that taken by young Newton.

Inky had pulled his Colt, but held his fire, puzzled. Cassidy and the others reined in and in amazement watched eleven men in all flit, ghostlike through the dust, into the heavy growth of young trees. And every man was masked.

Inky, to cover his bewilderment, took off his hat and ostentatiously scratched his head.

"Now what in the sacred name of sauerkraut do ya make of that?" he inquired.

"Write your own answer," replied Cassidy. "I've seen a lot of foolish stuff, but this beats me. I pass. Maybe it's a new game that we'll have to study up on."

Inky suddenly raised a voice that would have made a fog-horn work overtime.

"*Oo-o-oh, Bi-i-ll!*" he shouted. "Come on back! This is Inky!"

In response, from a point perhaps two hundred yards distant, came a shrill prolonged whistle. Inky stuck both forefingers between his teeth and replied with another screecher. For perhaps two minutes they waited, then the stallion was heard smashing through the brush. Several seconds of silence, then young Newton's voice—

"Hey, Inky?"

"Yep. Come over to the road. You're among friends."

"All right, Inky. I'm sure glad to be."

And when Peaceful Pete's son and heir appeared in sight he was an object lesson against riding through brush unless protected by chaps, gantlets, gloves and other essential equipment, which many people think that cowpunchers wear merely for sartorial effect. Bill was a bloody mess, which is not English slang, but entirely literal.

To begin with, his hands and face were bleeding from dozens of gashes and scratches. The shirt-sleeves were almost torn from both arms and both knees were bare and bloody. The woolen trousers he had worn had proved to be no protection at all; they were ripped to ribbons half-way up both thighs. He was also hatless, and obviously excited.

"Where'd they go?" was his first question, as his horse broke through the brush on to the road and he caught sight of Inky.

"Away—wherever that is," replied Inky. "And who's your shy friends that you call they?"

"It's your question, Inky. You answer it; I can't. I don't know who they are and they haven't given me any time to think about it."

Cassidy took stock of the younger Newton. He was perhaps eighteen, tow-headed, snappy-eyed, and it was obvious that he was as game as they make them.

"What's the rules of this new game you're sittin' into?" inquired Inky, likewise taking stock of the youth's sketchy remnants of clothing.

Bill grinned and gingerly fingered a gash on his face.

"Keep an unpunctured hide is the first rule—if you can. That's the only one I've been using and I worked that overtime.

I started something last night by cutting through the nine-strand fence around the packing-house. I located a lot of green hides with dad's brand on them. They had been blotted, but the work was crude. I could read them—and smell that they'd just been faked over. Then the night watchman caught me.

"I played ring-around-rosy and hide-and-go-seek with him, but he didn't get a bit amused. He shot at me twice. Then I knocked him out by dropping on to his head from the rafters after he'd lost me in the dark. I hope I busted his darned neck! That shooting started a lot of excitement outside. I finally got away with one hide. I wanted to get it back to the ranch for dad to take a look at before he came to town this morning, but I was headed off and had to cut around through the hills. My hoss busted a leg among some rocks, and I packed that darned hide every bit of twelve miles to the ranch. Dad had been gone two hours before I got there.

"And then that masked gang came along. Chuck was the only man at the ranch-house. He yelled to me and I ran to the corral. King Boy was outside the corral fence, hoping for some oats. I just had time to jump on him and head away through the south pasture. That gang shot at me some, so I knew I'd guessed right in making myself scarce. They kept me from reaching the Yucca road. I cut through the hills, but they outguessed me every time. They came right along, keeping to the level while I was forcing King Boy along the ridges. Got him a little winded for a while. And I lost my Colt somewhere in the brush.

"I finally got on to the Yucca road, but they've been riding —— bent within gun-shot for about three miles. Then I saw you fellahs. This big fellah on the pinto—" indicating Cassidy—"had me guessing. He was the only one of you I had time to see. I didn't recognize him, so I kept on, taking no chances. I headed King Boy right into the brush. I waited to see if they were following—and then I heard you holler. That's all."

"It's plenty," declared Inky. "But how ya ride King Boy without even a hackamore gets me."

"Oh, we were brought up together. We understand each other. He likes me. A hand on his neck or my just speaking to him is enough."

"Yeh!" was Inky's dry comment. "Hand on the neck! Huh! Some day he'll plant a hoof on *your* neck. Here, want ya to get acquainted with Cassidy. Your dad's gone to El Paso and he's appointed Cassidy as your guardian. I'm glad to duck out from under that job."

"Is he going to guardian you, too?" grinned Bill.

"We—ell, I'll listen to him, at any rate. That's more than you'll do to me."

"Aw, let the kid alone," begged Cassidy. "He needs a lot of turpentine to heal those scratches more than he needs anything else. I'll bet he's hungry, too. Let's head for the ranch."

Some forty minutes later the little cavalcade was passing through Boca Cañon.

"Wonder what they'd have done with Bill if they'd caught him," voiced Cassidy.

"I have a —— of a good idea," replied Inky. "He wouldn't have held water when they got through. The kid was bouncing a stick of dynamite when he undertook to get that hide. Ya gotta give him credit for nerve for pulling off a raid on his own hook. I kinda wondered where he was this mornin' when we left for town. But Pete never worries about him. He's declared often that Bill will never die a natural death."

By this time they had reached the end of the cañon where it opened into a wide draw, at the upper end of which, distant half a mile, stood the buildings and corrals of the Newton ranch.

Inky and Bill stopped their horses, in mixed amazement and concern. The low, rambling frame structure which had been the ranch-house was now nothing but a long heap of sulkily smoking timbers and debris.

"My ——!" exclaimed Bill. "They set fire to it!"

He dug his heels into the stallion and dashed up the draw.

The others followed, but could not catch the big gray. A few yards from what had been the ranch-house Bill leaped from the stallion and dashed in among the smoking remnants of rafters. When the seven riders came up, Bill stood, tearfully angry, in the center of what had been the kitchen. Near him was a large iron range, partially covered by a heap of blackened bricks. His face grimaced pathetically in mingled rage and grief.

"They shot him—the dirty killers!" he

cried, wiping his hand across his eyes. "They shot him! They shot him!"

The seven men waded in through the dying coals, to view the charred remains of old 'Chuck' Bender, the ranch cook.

"They must have shot him—and then—set fire—to the place," gulped Bill in a dazed monotone. "They sure butchered him. Old Chuck was about seventy, but he was no cripple. He could show speed at ladling out a plate of beef and beans when a hungry man blew in. They must have shot him, or he wouldn't have been caught in the fire. They shot him cold-bloodedly. Old Chuck wouldn't have resisted. He'd smile at them and say: 'Hungry, boys?' no matter who they were."

Pause. Inky placed a comforting arm around Bill's heaving shoulders. Bill shook it off.

"—— it, fellahs! Let's go and tear Yucca City up by the roots! We'll string up those cowardly, murdering snakes!"

"Let's bury poor Chuck first," proposed Inky.

From both sides of the foreman's nose hard lines were now deeply graven to the sides of a fighting jaw. His eyes were cold, hard.

"Get a blanket and take him out of there," suggested Cassidy. "We may need the body as evidence—if there's any law in this county."

"Law, ——!" spat Inky in angry disgust. "Pete Newton has been believing in the law, and ya see where it got him. The only law now is *us!*"

He strode toward the bunk-house.

Now the bunk-house had been the original home of the first settler in Boca Valley. Of Spanish type, it had been built in the days when a couple of hundred painted and feathered bucks were liable to drop around any morning with the intention of gathering scalps and glory. They never got anything but glory when attacking the old settler's residence, for its walls were of adobe, three feet in thickness.

In all four walls, windows were set at strategic angles for the one purpose of using them as loopholes. On the inside of the walls they were scarcely more than slits, but they widened outside to allow a wider radius of fire. The door was seven inches thick, hung on five massive, hand-wrought hinges, and could be made, by an ingenious though crude arrangement of bars, into almost an integral part of the wall. In the early days the building had been an impregnable fortress.

When their grim task with old Chuck had been accomplished, Inky returned to the bunk-house, followed by three cowboys. He came out, buckling on a belt, the loops of which were filled with long brass cartridges. In the crook of his arm was a Winchester. When the three cowboys came forth, they had armed themselves in a like manner.

"That's all the rifles we got left," explained Inky. "The rest were ruint in the fire. Pete Newton was peaceful, but he sure had an arsenal in the house."

Including the cook, there had been ten men on Newton's payroll. Inky had slept in the ranch-house. Of the eight men in the bunk-house gang, five had ridden into town that day with Inky. The other three had been sent by him that morning on to the range, and two of these now came galloping in, having seen from afar the smoke of the ranch-house going up in flames. Both of these carried life insurance—in the form of Winchesters in saddle-boots—in addition to their Colts.

They assured Inky that the third man was on his way and that he had a carbine with him.

"That's fine," said Inky. "Cassidy," he continued, shaking his head. "There'll be eleven of us—including Bill. Not enough! We'd better ride over to the Two Prong and then to Bob Saxmar's. That won't be much out of our way, and we'll gather some recruits."

Yucca City was almost due north. When Inky climbed into his saddle he headed west, to call upon the nearest neighbor. This was the Two Prong ranch, owned by Charlie Sarver. It was five miles distant.

Sarver was middle-aged, possessing mild blue eyes and a naturally grim face. He listened to Inky's recital and the mildness left his eyes.

"Hit the trail for Saxmar's!" he ordered. "We'll catch up with you—eight of us."

And Inky gladly hit the trail.

Bob Saxmar almost wept, the reason for the near tears being that he could muster only four fighting men. One of these was his cook, who declared he could fight better than he could wrestle pans.

It was at sun-down when twenty-three grim, determined men on spent horses arrived in Yucca City. They did not carry out young Newton's program of tearing the town up by the roots, for the simple reason that they could find nowhere to start.

Yucca City was a closed corporation. Not a person would admit knowledge of eleven riders leaving or arriving in town. Two hours spent in thorough but futile investigation served to do nothing more than make Inky's men and their quest seem foolish. Yucca City treated them with respect, with so much respect that Cassidy suspected a note of irony, of sarcasm, behind it. Yucca City collectively had its tongue in its cheek.

IV

LATER that night, twenty-two disappointed, cursing men rode out of town. Cassidy remained behind having announced his intention of becoming a detective.

"Fair enough," had been Inky's parting insult, "but don't *sing*. Detectives don't do that, and you can't, anyway."

Cassidy as a singer was undeniably not very good; as a detective he was worse. Detectives do not make a specialty of insulting the town marshal, going peacefully with him to the town lock-up and then turning suddenly and locking up the officer. Cassidy did not make a specialty of it, either, but the marshal, waiting behind the bars for some one to let him out, did not know the difference.

With the marshal out of the way for the rest of the night, Cassidy proceeded in turn to cultivate the friendship of several bartenders. His method of "detecting" was to visit all the saloons in hopes of overhearing gossip about the eleven mysterious riders. Visiting a great many saloons meant the necessity of partaking of a great many drinks, and partaking of a great many drinks meant that Cassidy would get drunk. But that was one of the privileges of being a self-appointed detective. It was a great job, and Cassidy liked it more and more with each jolt of lubricant for squeaky tonsils. He liked the job so much and was so intent on it that he even forgot to sing—until he wandered into the All Hours Saloon.

By this time it was eleven o'clock and Cassidy's jag was a pippin. He walked straight, as he always did, no matter how much liquor he consumed, but mentally he was bucking a gale. His tongue was playing strange tricks with what he wanted to say.

The All Hours Saloon was deserted, except for its proprietor, James Logan. Logan had dismissed his night bartender and was preparing to count up the cash, in readiness to close the doors. It was an off night.

Then Cassidy entered, and found a friend willing to listen. Having seen Cassidy early that day in the company of Pete Newton, Logan was more than interested. He tried to pump the lanky cowboy, but Cassidy wanted to sing. Logan set up the drinks and encouraged Cassidy's idea.

Logan was an expert at handling intoxicated persons. With a little friendliness and a little patience in steering around the thread of conversation he might be able to discover all of Pete Newton's plans for action against his persecutors. And Logan was the secretary-treasurer of the Yucca City Co-operative Packing House.

But first of all he had to listen to this—

"Comradesh, comradesh, ever shinsh we were boysh;
Sharing eash othersh troubles, sharing eash othersh
joysh;
Comradesh when manhood wash da-awning,
Faishful whate'er might beti-ide;
When danger threatened my dar-rling
Old comrade wash there by my shi-ide!"

It was pretty bad, so much so that Logan debated whether to use knockout drops or a bung-starter to forestall any more attempts at singing. But with the alleged song out of his system Cassidy appeared to be much more sober.

"Le' me have a drink of water? Man in my poshishun can't afford to get too drunk. People might find out who I am. Ain't that right?"

"Sure," answered Logan, hoping the water would drown any further desire to sing. "I saw you with Pete Newton today. That would give people a line on you."

Now Cassidy was not half as drunk as Logan believed him to be. The mention of Pete's name served to sober him as much as a bucket of ice-water dashed over him would have done. With an effort he concentrated, and his brain settled down. It was working fast, slightly cloudy, but rapidly becoming exhilaratingly clear. His imagination arose and took possession. His tongue lost its twist.

"Gosh, I hope I didn't give things away. I should have looked you up sooner."

Logan, slightly puzzled, glanced sharply at him.

"Yes, sir," continued Cassidy, noticing that he had succeeded in holding Logan's interest. "I'd a looked you up sooner, only I couldn't get away from Pete's men."

"Yes?" Logan's eyes had narrowed.

All at once he saw daylight—or thought he did.

"Sh-h!"

Although he and Logan were the only men in the place, Cassidy pretended to look cautiously around.

"You know who I am, don't you?"

"Sure I do. When'd you get in town?" Logan had tentatively accepted Cassidy as some one he had been expecting.

"This morning, but I just explained to you."

As yet Cassidy did not know what it was all about. He was simply "kidding" Logan along.

"When'll Pete get back?"

"Next week." Cassidy took a shot in the dark.

Logan nodded, so Cassidy tried another, as he realized that out of his semi-drunken joking might come something of value.

"*When do I get my money?*"

Logan grinned.

"You're sure right after it, ain't you? I know Pete wired El Paso two days ago, but we didn't expect you so soon."

"Yeh, I got here sooner than I expected, and even a little sooner than that."

This was just "stalling" to give himself time to think. Suddenly it dawned upon him that Newton had wired for another detective, and that he had joked Logan into making a natural mistake.

"Yes," he went on, "us detectives are always ready to travel."

And then to give himself more time in which to readjust his ideas he called for another drink, of which he managed to spill the greater part before raising to his lips.

"Here's to Clymer!" was his toast, Clymer being the man in charge of the El Paso office of the Southwestern Stock-growers' Protective Association.

Whatever doubts Logan may have had were completely dispelled.

"Here's to him," he responded. "I suppose he told you what we wanted."

"Sure! And I wanta say that up here in Yucca County you sure play a double-cinch game. Clymer gave me the outlines of what he knew. That's why I wanta know when I get my money."

"You'll get it tomorrow—the first payment."

"That'll be all right." Cassidy began wishing he had taken about three less drinks.

Concentration under the circumstances was a strain. He feared Logan would ask some leading question to which he would guess the wrong answer. He kept talking to keep Logan from springing a question.

"Yeh, Clymer told me how you're gonna play Pete Newton to a finish. And lemme tell you right now that that old buzzard is gonna be tough pickings. Lucky for you that Clymer put *me* on the job."

And then Cassidy thanked the goddess of luck, for at that moment four drunken cowboys noisily entered and called for drinks. Cassidy seized his opportunity for a graceful departure.

"See you tomorrow," he said. "S'long."

Once outside, he made his way to the intense gloom behind the building. He stumbled over an empty beer barrel, turned the barrel up, sat on it, took his head between his hands and endeavored to squeeze out a coherent line of thought.

He already knew that Pete had wired for another detective. The officer had not yet arrived. Cassidy in his drunken, playful mysteriousness had blindly given Logan cause to think that he might be the officer. And Cassidy now realized that the expected officer had been bought in advance, that Clymer was abetting the crookedness of the Yucca County Association. This much milled around in Cassidy's head and he could get no farther. His imagination was lying down on the job. Vainly he cudgeled his brain and finally quit in disgust.

He started away, with the intention of finding lodging for the night, when from a point perhaps half a mile distant sounded the prolonged blast of a locomotive whistle.

Snap! Into Cassidy's mind leaped the solution. He knew that a passenger train, west-bound, passed through Yucca City late at night. The expected cattle detective might arrive on it. And if he arrived it was up to Cassidy first to gain possession of the officer's badge and credentials and then to get him out of the way. With Cassidy, thought and action were almost synonymous, so when the train arrived he was on hand.

Three passengers alighted. Two of them were women, dance-hall girls, or worse, by their appearance. The third was a burly, rugged-jawed, big-boned individual, with close-set hard eyes and a close-clipped mustache. Cassidy approached him.

"Did Clymer send you?" he inquired.

"Yeh," was the short response.

"I'm here to meet you—to take you to Newton's ranch. My name's Cassidy."

"Mine's Rainey."

They shook hands, meanwhile sizing up each other. Cassidy gazed openly at the other man; Rainey's gaze was keen, but rather furtive, from the corners of his eyes. Upon the depot platform Rainey deposited his grip, pulled a "fifth" whisky bottle from his pocket and offered it to Cassidy.

Merely to observe the amenities, Cassidy took a very short drink. When he passed the bottle back there were still a full two inches remaining. Rainey's drink consisted of what remained in the bottle. He threw the empty container away, shook himself and inquired:

"There's no hurry getting to the ranch, is there? I want to see a party here in town."

"You have to see him later," replied Cassidy. "You're drawing pay now, and orders are orders. You're to report at the ranch immediately. Them's my orders."

"All right," was the surly-toned answer. "Let's get there. I'm tired and want to hit the hay."

Cassidy led the way to a livery-stable, where he hired a saddle-horse for Rainey. The latter, before lashing his limp leather hand-bag behind his saddle, brought out another bottle of whisky and a corkscrew.

"Can I get any Cyrus Noble in town?" he inquired. "That's the only brand I drink and I only got four bottles left."

"Sure. Plenty of it," answered Cassidy, making a mental note of the brand.

They started out. Cassidy had been twice over the road and now even in the darkness managed to keep without hesitation on the right track. Now and then, Rainey had recourse to his bottle. Cassidy was willing to help. He had liked Cyrus Noble for years—whenever he could get it.

When they pulled up at the bunk-house all hands within were asleep. Cassidy's yell brought Inky and most of the other boys to the door. Guns were in their hands and they were shy about exposing any parts of their persons until Cassidy made himself known.

"This is Mr. Rainey, the cattle detective Pete wired to El Paso for," was Cassidy's way of introducing the newcomer. "You've gotta fix a bunk for him."

"Sure," responded Inky. "He can have one of my blankets if he ain't got any. It ain't cold tonight. Johnny, you and Bill rustle some hay for another bunk. Bill and me," he explained, "are bunking in here, now that the house is burnt. Come right in, Mr. Rainey. Hurry up and get that lamp lighted, George. Cassidy and me'll take the hosses to the corral."

At the corral gates, a hundred yards distant from the bunk-house, Inky drew close to Cassidy and whispered:

"What's wrong with that *hombre.* I'm suspicious because you called him *mister.*"

"Shucks, Inky. I need sleep. I can't take the rest of the night off to tell you all that's wrong with him. I told you I was gonna be a detective, and the angels sure were good to me."

"Why, did ya sing?"

"Not too much. I had the time of my life. I'd 'a' been a blank if I hadn't got tanked good and plenty. That's what made me a good detective. I was under a strain for awhile, but I come out of it all right. Pure blind drunk luck, that's all. Now listen, Inky. This man, Rainey, is crooked as the ——! Logan thinks I'm him. Rainey's got papers or something on him to prove who he is. Maybe a badge. I want that badge and those papers—I need them."

"Sure, steal 'em tonight."

"Uh-uh! That'd be too crude—and too easy. We gotta show a little artistry at gettin' them. He's been riding all day in a day-coach. He's full of liquor. He'll be tired and'll want to sleep. You wait till he starts snorin'—and he looks like he'll snore—then get his gun and take the powder out of the shells."

"What's the scheme?"

"In the morning you'll take him for a ride—to sort of look over the land. I'll be layin' for both of you somewhere over the ridge. Take the trail for the Two Prong ranch. I'll wear a handkerchief and a slicker to cover me up. I'll be a reg'lar bandit, savvy?"

"Sure. It's long-winded but slick. He can't suspect that we're wise to him and are using him. It's in case he shows fight that you want his gun fixed?"

"That's the idea. I'd hate to have to gun him up if he hasn't got more sense than to go for his Colt after I get the drop."

"But the phony shells can be detected. If I get his gun I'll take it to the blacksmith shop and file off the firing-pin."

"Nope! You'd better take the spring clear out, snap it in two, then put both pieces back inside the butt. Then he can't prove anything. He'll think it just *happened* to bust."

"That's better," approved Inky. "Then you'll stick us up, take our guns and everything in our clothes. I won't be carryin' much on me—just so ya won't clutter yourself up with too big a load."

"After the stick-up is where you make yourself useful, Inky. You've gotta keep Rainey at the ranch. If he gets into Yucca City let it be over your dead body—or you're liable to get a first-class chance to look at mine. Keep him 'detecting' out here. Tell him you can't spare a horse. Tell him you've got orders to keep him on the ranch till Pete gets back. *Tell him anything*—as long as it keeps him away from Yucca City."

"Leave that to me."

"And say, Inky, they're gonna pay me some blood money tomorrow. Would it be right for me to keep it?"

Unseen in the darkness, Inky's face had turned into a mass of wrinkles, bisected by a wide grin.

"Now, Slivers, ya know that wouldn't be right—to take their money under false pretences that way, unless——"

Inky hesitated, covering a laugh with a cough.

"Unless what?" prompted Cassidy, slightly worried over a question of ethics.

"Unless ya split it with me, ya crooked son-of-a-gun. Money got that way comes under the head of a natural—perk—perk— Aw, ya know what I mean. I saw the word in a book once. I'll be doing half the work by keepin' *Mister* Rainey away from the town, so I oughta get half the cash ya collect."

"Yeh, you'll earn a split by ridin' herd on Rainey while I'm detectin' around and enjoyin' myself. But, you red-headed essence of insults, every time after this that you make a smart remark about my singing I'm gonna dock you ten per cent. of your split. That's *my* proposition—what d'yuh think of it?"

"Suits me," laughed Inky. "I'll be good. I need tha money—if any, as Pete would say. Le's go back now. I'll fix his gun. You ride off first in the morning. Take the south road till ya get out of sight, then cut back to the trail to Sarver's. I'll give ya an hour before I start out with Rainey."

"Be sure about that gun. I don't like the coyote, but at that I'd sure hate to hafta shoot him."

V

INKY did a workmanlike job of breaking the main-spring in Rainey's Colt. But no shooting was necessary on Cassidy's part when he stepped out from behind a patch of brush on the Two Prong trail and in approved style "stuck-up" Inky and the detective. Rainey in his way was no coward, but he was discreet. At Cassidy's order he hastened to raise his hands, which is the wisest thing to do when a man behind a cocked gun orders it.

Cassidy was masked by a red handkerchief, his clothing covered by a slicker, and he wore Inky's best hat, a new black Stetson, which he had taken from the bunk-house wall. Inky had worn this hat to town the previous day, but it was the apple of his eye and he did not wear it when working on the range. That morning he had donned a dilapidated remnant of headgear that had been left behind by some cowboy.

Cassidy searched the foreman and was forced to grin behind his handkerchief when upon Inky's person the only things he found were cigaret makings and a block of matches. Inky had left even his Colt in the bunk-house. Rainey, however, was rich pickings. From him Cassidy took a pearl-handled .44, a fat wallet, an expensive watch and a silver badge. All he really wanted was the badge and whatever credentials the wallet held, but was forced to make a clean sweep in order to avoid arousing the detective's suspicions as to the motive back of the robbery. By his breath he knew Rainey had been drinking again—or yet.

After leading his victim's horses away for about half a mile, Cassidy turned them loose in the brush and hastened back to the ranch. He was lounging in the shade of the bunk-house, wearing his old gray hat, when Inky and the irate officer rode in. Inky had found the two horses grazing near where Cassidy had left them.

Inky boiled with simulated indignation and wrath.

"Saddle up, ya pampered sons-of-guns!" he howled at the two cowboys he had purposely ordered to remain at the bunkhouse. "You, too, Cassidy! All of ya get your saddle guns. We got stuck-up and robbed!"

"How about me?" queried young Bill Newton, who had been playing seven-up with the two cow-punchers. "Let me get in on this."

"Huh! Ya ain't got a gun. Ya lose your gun pirootin' around in the brush and then expect me to make good for ya. Not a chance! They ain't a loose gun on the place. You're the cook, anyway. You're the only one who can wrastle up grub fit to eat. Ya stick here—or I'll tell your old man when he gets back."

"Go ahead and tell—and what good'll it do you?" sniffed Bill. "Let me have your Colt or your saddle-gun—you don't need both of them."

"I gotta give my Winchester to Rainey, Bill. Sorry."

So five men started out on a wild goose chase, the path of which was chosen by Inky, who finally pulled up his horse and motioned for the other riders to stop.

"Rainey," he suggested artfully, "s'pose ya take the two boys and head off for the Two Prong. They'll show ya the way. If Sarver—he owns it—knows anythin' about a lone rider passin' through his valley you'll be right on his trail. If not—why just return to the ranch and wait for me. Be sure and *wait.* I may need ya bad. Cassidy'n me'll mosey down along this ridge and see if we can pick up any trail. You're the one who really got robbed and you're a man who knows this man-huntin' business better than me. That's why I'm givin' ya charge of the two boys to go in the likeliest direction."

Inky's diplomacy was crude, but was just about on a par with Rainey's intelligence and methods. The detective felt vaguely flattered at Inky's compliment. He started out and left the two conspirators together. At his departing back Cassidy grinned, and turned to Inky.

"Fan out of here, boy. I've got a peach of an alibi for my conscience."

He galloped around a shoulder of the ridge.

"For your *wha-at?*" yelped Inky, spurring after him. "Say, ya animated yardstick, any galoot who tries to sing when he can't, like you do, ain't got a conscience."

"That'll cost you exactly ten per cent. of your share of what I get," answered Cassidy. "That was my proposition and you took me up on it. So don't squeal now."

"I won't!" grimaced Inky. "What was this here alibi ya had?"

"I've still got it. I'm savin' it up. I'll save you ten per cent. by not telling it. You'd only spring another insult."

"Aw, ya ain't got an alibi. If ya have, spring it. If any, as Pete would say."

"I haven't, huh? Listen, you take Rainey's watch and money back to the ranch and give them to him when he shows up. Tell him that we caught the robber and that he had thrown away the other junk—papers and such—before we caught him."

"Sounds all right. But how'll I account for not bringin' the robber to the ranch? And where'll you be?"

"That's the alibi part of it. Your tall friend Cassidy will immediately and now start taking the said robber to the excellent county jail situated within the corporate limits of Yucca City. That's what you'll tell Rainey. How's that?"

"Too —— much!" gasped Inky. "I hope I've got as much nerve as you have, but my trouble is that I ain't got so good an imagination. I'd sure love to pair up with ya for keeps. I think we'd get along fine. That stuff about ya takin' the robber to Yucca is eight dollars' worth of chips beyond the limit. I s'pose tha robber is gonna escape before ya get him to town?"

"If he does," grinned Cassidy, "you ain't supposed to know about it till later. Tell Rainey that when I get back I'll let him know when he is to appear as one of the witnesses against him. Tell him that court doesn't convene again till next week. Gimme a day or two in town—that'll be enough. Leave it to me."

Cassidy grinned again, flipped the detective's badge into the air, caught it, pinned it on his vest and made a burlesque of shining it up with his shirt-sleeve.

"S'long, Inky. This piece of tin was never pinned on a better man."

"Hate yourself, don't ya?" grinned Inky. "And how about Rainey's gun. I sure admire them fancy grips on the butt."

"You'll find that under the straw in the bunk I used last night. Your hat's under your bunk."

"Ya had your gall a-takin' that hat," stated Inky. "And then ya chuck it under a bunk. That hat cost me twenty bucks only four months ago."

"At that price you must have got a pair of boots, a new suit and six shirts free with it," scoffed Cassidy. "S'long! I gotta get this robber to town."

"Well, don't lose him too soon."

And with that they separated. Inky returned to the ranch, while Cassidy headed for Yucca City and large bunches of trouble.

ARRIVING in town, he made his way directly to the All Hours Saloon, where a stranger now presided behind the bar.

"Got any Cyrus Noble?" inquired Cassidy.

The bartender reached for a partially emptied bottle and slid it on to the mahogany together with a glass. Cassidy helped himself to a good-sized slug. The one drink would serve as good as a dozen for the simple purpose of perfuming his breath, which was all he desired. Upon entering, he had pretended to be drunk.

"Where's Logan?" he inquired.

"He's in the back room." With a jerk of a thumb.

As though following an alcoholic chalkline, Cassidy weaved his way to the door of the rear room, opened it without knocking and lurched within.

Seated at a table were five men, who looked up sharply at Cassidy's abrupt entrance.

"That's him now," said Logan, rising and walking around the table with outstretched hand to greet Cassidy.

"I didn't get your name last night," he continued.

"My name's Rainey—Henry Rainey."

Cassidy's manner held just the right measure of what apparently was drunken harshness; it seemed to tell the men that he was as hard as they make 'em to deal with.

"Shake hands with Judge Shortall," said Logan, indicating a fleshy, red-nosed, pompous individual, whom Cassidy recognized as having occupied the judicial seat at the previous day's trial.

"And this is Bud Sanders—he's the packing-house foreman."

" 'Sta meetcha," growled Bud, enveloping Cassidy's hand in one twice as large.

Bud was beefy, weighing at least two hundred and seventy on the hoof. Excessively small close-set eyes were almost hidden in rolls of fat. He oozed lardy perspiration. His face was the dead color of tallow. Cassidy instinctively did not like him.

Next, introductions followed to a pair of cattlemen, both of whom were prominent members of the Yucca County Cattlemen's Association. One was genial in outward appearance, smiling-eyed, bluff, hearty in his greeting—in appearance typical of the so-called "big-hearted westerner." His name was Stanley Nettle. Behind his back he was known as "Stingy" Nettle. He owned the Double Diamond ranch, forty per cent. of the packing-house stock and was reputed to be the wealthiest man in the county.

His benign physical appearance was a lie; in reality he was cold-blooded, calculating to an extreme, utterly unscrupulous, a murderer and thief on a big scale. But he committed no murders with his own soft hands; he hired other men to do his killing for him. Together with Judge Shortall he supplied the brains for the deep-laid crooked plans of the thieving gang.

The other cattleman was Johnny Jewett, owner of the J Up and J Down. He was an insignificant appearing little man, a great admirer of Nettle and completely beneath the latter's thumb. Nettle's word or command was gospel for Johnny Jewett.

When acknowledging the introduction and shaking hands with Judge Shortall, Cassidy had deliberately blown his whisky-tainted breath into the severe face of his honor. In at least one respect the judge was very human; he condemned most heartily in others, especially in employees, the very thing he was most prone to do himself. The judge was a heavy drinker, but the fact that Cassidy appeared to be drunk served to arouse his suspicion and resentment. A detective or any other active officer of the law should never drink, according to the judge.

On the table were a bottle of liquor, several glasses, pen, ink and paper. Cassidy reached for the bottle, read the label and replaced the whisky on the table.

"Got any Cyrus Noble?" he demanded of Logan. "That's the only brand I drink when on the job."

"Maybe you've had enough for this morning," suggested Logan. "We've got an important conference on. You're in on it, and a clear head will be necessary."

Cassidy laughed.

"Conference be ——! How can I have a clear head unless I clear it with what I need. I won't sit in your conference unless that table gets decorated with old Cyrus. I've got to have it."

"Oh, very well."

Logan left the room and returned with a bottle of the specified brand.

Meanwhile, Shortall had been suspiciously eying Cassidy. He reached for paper and pen and hastily dashed off a note while Cassidy helped himself to the bottle.

"You have means of identification, I suppose?" was his honor's cold inquiry as with distaste he watched Cassidy take a second short drink.

"Sure I have."

On to the table Cassidy tossed the papers and letters he had removed from Rainey's wallet.

The judge carefully inspected them, and appeared to be still unconvinced as again he eyed the apparently near-drunk cattle detective. As a matter of fact, Cassidy was practically cold sober and would remain so. Cassidy was enjoying himself so much that his greatest difficulty was in keeping a straight face.

Judge Shortall folded the sheet of paper on which he had written, slid it across to Logan and ordered:

"Take care of that immediately. Tell Gordon to send special instructions for an extra rapid reply."

Logan hastened away. The judge turned to Cassidy.

"You have talked with Newton?"

"Yes."

"What were his orders to you?"

"To get the goods on all of you. He's sure an awful mad and suspicious *hombre*."

The judge's countenance relaxed very slightly.

"He has good cause to be. And what were Clymer's instructions to you?"

"To report to you or Logan."

Momentarily Cassidy held his breath, fearing there might have been a "catch" in the question. The judge nodded, appeared to be satisfied and then gazed absently at the bottle of Cyrus Noble.

Logan returned.

"Has it gone?" inquired the judge.

"Yes. It went *pronto*."

"Well, you and Johnny take Rainey out for a while. I want to talk to Sanders and Nettle."

"Sure," said Logan, reaching for the bottle of Cyrus Noble. "Come on, Rainey, we'll hoist a couple out at the bar."

They were followed by Jewett.

"It's this way," apologetically explained Logan, after old Cyrus had suffered to the extent of two fingers each, "the judge is so danged suspicious that he doesn't believe himself half the time. That's a fact. He's suspicious of everything and everybody. He's suspicious of you, and he's sent a wire to Clymer. Your drinking didn't make a hit with the judge. He got kind of mad—when you come right down to it. I read his message before I sent it off. It's kind of insulting, but that's merely the judge's way with everything. He wired this to Clymer:

> "Man highly intoxicated claims to be Rainey. What brand does he drink? Rush answer."

Cassidy laughed. He could not help it. Shortall had played right into his hands by his wording of the message.

"I had you sized up last night," Logan went on. "I've heard of you before and I know you drink—some."

"Wait till the judge gets Clymer's answer. The judge was serious, but Clymer thinks he has a sense of humor."

This was second-hand knowledge on Cassidy's part. Clymer was well known in the West, and Cassidy had bunked with men who had worked for him.

"No," he continued. "The judge can't insult me by a wire like that. They've wired Clymer before about me. I'm not here to get insulted. I'm here to collect a chunk of coin and to do some dirty work for the association."

Logan grinned and ordered another round.

FINALLY there entered young Gordon, the station agent and telegraph operator. He handed a yellow sheet of paper to Logan and hurried out again. The message was unsealed. Logan unfolded it, read it, grinned, then handed it to Cassidy.

Clymer's reply read as follows:

Identification of Rainey is complete if he drinks Cyrus Noble. He drinks only when he is alone or with somebody and he works best when he is drunk. He's the best man on our staff.

"You win, all right," smiled Logan.

He regained the message, folded it and took it in to Judge Shortall.

Johnny Jewett downed the drink with which he had been playing, then spoke in a confidential whisper:

"The judge is always secretive. Logan ain't—when he knows and likes a man. Don't tell the judge that Logan let you in on the telegrams."

"Of course I won't," Cassidy assured him.

And then Logan appeared, to summon them to the back room.

Judge Shortall was holding the yellow slip of paper in one hand while in the other was a pair of spectacles with which he tapped nervously on the table as again he sized up the supposed detective.

"Rainey," he finally set forth, "you're here to protect us."

"From Peaceful Pete?" queried Cassidy, grinning.

"Not exactly," coughed the judge, while the others laughed. "You're to be our star witness to offset any rumors that may start. In a physical sense we can protect ourselves. Pete is dangerous, tricky.

"He poisoned about a hundred head of beeves belonging to Nettle and Jewett. And he has committed other crimes for which we can not hope to bring him to trial for the reason that he committed them in Mesquite County. And from the fanatic occupying the Mesquite bench we can hope for no justice. Pete's latest outrage is rustling—stealing Jewett's beeves. He's working the J Up and J Down into his N. It's clever work with a running-iron. We have no means of discovering exactly how long this has been going on or how many head he has stolen. So we'll collect—direct.

"Warrants will be issued. Newton and all his men are to be arrested, by due process of law, and held in custody. This will be done quietly—no one will know where they have gone. We will hold them until we have worked a sufficient number of N's into Nettle's vent brand, the Muleshoe Double Diamond. Newton's single ear-split will be made into Nettle's swallow-fork.

"Huh!" grunted Cassidy, thinking fast, as the feasibility of this outrageous robbery, under cover of what was supposed to be the law, dawned on him. "How many of Pete's cattle are you gonna work over?"

"Every ——ed critter we can lay a rope on!" swore Nettle. "As fast as we can round 'em up and blot 'em they'll be run through the packing-house or shipped to Kansas City. When we get started I can get up to fifty cars a week to ship 'em on.

"And I've been thinking, judge, that we might drive some over the Casa Sols to my range in Cedar County."

"Not a one!" retorted the judge, nervously flipping away the match he had just touched to a cigar. "We're all of us in on this. You don't send any on to your ranges. We'll work over the brands and get every one turned immediately into cash. We won't leave a single blotted brand as possible evidence when Pete gets out of jail."

"Why let him out?" came Bud Sanders' throaty inquiry as he banged his fat fist onto the table. "Let him meet with a fatal accident."

"No more killings!"

The judge was emphatic.

Cassidy was almost gasping at the wholesale scheme of theft that had been outlined. The loot would amount to something over two hundred thousand dollars.

"Where do I come in?" he finally inquired.

"Well," answered Nettle, "you were hired by Pete. You're Pete's legal guardian, in a way of speaking, while he's in jail. Your chief job will be to keep your eyes shut. Later, we may need your testimony to whiten things up to the outside world. You will tell what you saw—which will be *nothing*. That'll take the edge off Pete's squeal."

"How about the Two Prong thing?" questioned Jewett.

"Never mind that," advised Nettle. "We're biting off enough now. Any Two Prongs among Pete's cattle go right in with them to be blotted. We've figured that out. I had that in mind nearly two years ago when I got the registrar to accept my Muleshoe addition to the Double Diamond.

"And, judge, I want to repeat that you're overlooking a big bet. You're figuring only on steers. How about the cows? They're what I want to drive over to the Cedar Range."

"No!" With finality. "You want to take too many chances and I won't let you do it. We'll clean the range of steers and let it go at that."

"Why not fasten a murder charge on to Pete and his men. Send 'em all up for life. Then we can clean the range proper—cows and all. I'll take my share out in cows. That'll mean a lot more cash for you and the others."

The judge nervously moistened his lips. Plainly he was tempted.

"I'll think—I'll think it—over."

To keep his composure in the face of these amazing revelations Cassidy had rolled and lighted a cigaret. He assumed a hard-boiled manner.

"When do I get my money?" he demanded.

"Part now," answered Logan. "You get a thousand now and the other four thousand after the last steer is shipped. You've got your own arrangement as to Clymer's share of it, I suppose?"

"Sure."

Logan walked over to a large safe, opened it and from a sheaf of bills counted out one thousand dollars. Cassidy calmly pocketed the money and inquired:

"Who else is in on it? I want to know where everybody stands. How about the sheriff?"

"Oh, Harris is all right," exclaimed Logan. "He's a danged good sheriff, as honest as ——." Then with a laugh: "That is, except when honesty interferes with our interests. He gets his percentage out of it."

"Where is he now? I might have to work together with him."

"He's out of it temporarily. He's in bed at "Doc" Buchanan's. He felt grouchy and picked a quarrel with a gray-haired stranger this morning and the stranger was right handy with a Colt. Harris didn't size him up as a gunman because he didn't have a trigger-finger. Shot off, I reckon. But Harris was unlucky in his sizing up. Out from a shoulder holster comes this old-timer's gun in his left hand and *spat-bang* with the right at the same time he fans the hammer. Got Harris in the arm and in the ribs. He'll be out in a few weeks."

"This fracas come off right out there in the barroom," put in Jewett.

"Yes," Logan warmed up to the tale, "Jack Firthman breezed in on the heels of the shooting. Jack's our town marshal, but not a very good one. He made the mistake of trying to bluff this old wolf. All the old wolf did was to get the drop on Jack, take his gun away and kick him out of the place. Then he orders another drink, invites me to have one with him.

"I can't help but sort of admire the old fire-eater, but I've got to help maintain the law in town, so I slipped a little chloral into his rye. I signaled Jack, and he and my bartender carried this old terror to the county jail. Jack wouldn't stand for us taking him to the town lock-up; he wanted him off his hands. But this old-timer is the reason that Harris ain't in on this conference. He was sure a howling wolf—while he lasted."

"He sounds interesting," drawled Cassidy. "Why don't you hire him. You could use a man like that."

"We might, at that. However, the judge has concluded that he'd better make an example of him. The old-timer is due for a five-year stretch. We've got to show that there is some law here."

"Now," put forth Cassidy, "Now that we've got things settled between us, what am I supposed to do?"

"Anything you want. Stay around Pete's ranch and make some kind of play to show that you're earning the money he's paying you. We may help you by planting some faked evidence against some one in Mesquite County. That'll help you make a showing and give you better standing later on when it comes to a show-down."

Judge Shortall puffed nervously at his dead cigar, lighted it again, and resumed:

"We're going right ahead with our plans. Jewett is going to use a running-iron on some of his own beeves—work them over into N's and then drive them into town. With that as evidence he'll swear out warrants for Pete and everybody at his ranch. When Pete comes back from El Paso we'll slap him right into jail. I'll deny him bail."

VI

CASSIDY seethed with cold rage as he walked out into the open air. For a time he had been slightly doubtful, thinking that Pete Newton might really have worked over the brands on Jewett's cattle. But Shortall's plan of manufacturing evidence against Peaceful

Pete proved that Pete was innocent. Cassidy formed his plans; he would hasten to the Newton Ranch and take Inky in on it.

With this in view and to prepare for emergencies, he crossed the street to Whiggin's Merchandise Store. Around a corner, a block away, came the town marshal. Cassidy quickly stepped into the store, hoping the marshal had not seen him, but not caring much either way. To him, the marshal was a negligible quality, to be treated lightly.

"Hello, Cassidy," came a greeting from behind the counter.

Cassidy recognized the clerk as a former range mate, who had been badly crippled when attempting to ride an outlaw horse, and had been forced to get lighter work. Cassidy had never been on especially friendly terms with this man, and meeting him now was slightly disconcerting. But he returned the greeting.

His purchases consisted of two hundred rifle cartridges of two different calibers and several boxes of revolver ammunition. If a range war started he did not want to see Pete's men get caught short. He obtained a gunny-sack in which to carry them and started for the door.

"Stick 'em up!"

The town marshal's order was backed by a sawed-off shotgun.

Cassidy promptly dropped the sack and raised his hands. The marshal's prestige had suffered much of late and his idea of restoring it would be to fill some one like Cassidy with buckshot. The clerk, at the marshal's order, hastened to disarm Cassidy.

"You're in wrong, officer," said Cassidy. "Take me over to Logan's—and you'll find out where you stand."

"There's Logan now," said the clerk, pointing to where the saloon proprietor and Judge Shortall stood talking after stepping out from the door of the All Hours.

"Hike over there!" grunted the marshal.

"I'll stick with yuh, Cassidy," offered the clerk, limping out onto the store porch.

"Thanks, but you needn't bother. He'll turn me loose in a minute."

They crossed the street.

"Are you rehearsing for something?" laughed Logan. "What's the big scheme, Jack?"

"This is the man who locked me up last night," explained the marshal.

"That didn't hurt you any, and perhaps you learned something."

"Learned not to trust anybody," put in the judge. "So it was you, Rainey"—frowning severely—"who locked up our town officer."

"Call off your dogs, Jack," said Logan. "Rainey can't be locked up for that. I want you two boys to be friends."

"Rainey?" echoed the resentful marshal. "Limpy Worth just called him Cassidy."

"Um-m!" said the judge. "Call Worth over here. Let us repair to the back room and discover what is what."

"SURE his name is Cassidy," affirmed Worth, a little later, to the judge, Logan, Sanders and Nettle. "I worked one round-up with him on the R Quarter Circle up in Colorado."

"I went under the name of Cassidy then," was the explanation. "A detective doesn't always use the same name."

"Detective, nawthin'!" snorted Worth, trying to get a stand in with the powers that be. "He was nawthin' but an ornery, third-rate cowhand. I know all about him."

"Um-m!" repeated the judge. "This looks serious. Gentlemen, I need not inform you that we can not afford to take even the slightest chance. I have had my suspicions. As yet, however, we have not in the slightest proved that this man is not Rainey. I suggest that we hold him in jail until we have investigated."

He turned to Cassidy.

"You of course will appreciate our position. Too much is at stake."

"Sure. I don't blame you."

"I'm sorry, Rainey," offered Logan. "I'm satisfied that you're all right, but I've got to take the judge's word for things. His say goes. In the mean time you'd beter let me take care of that thousand."

"Judge!" Sanders cleared his throat. "What'll we do with him if he ain't Rainey? Beef him?"

"Much as I regret to say it, in the event that he is not Rainey he must not be allowed to live. He knows too much. I am not in favor of running wild on killing. It gives a bad name to the town and to the county. Shooting Chuck Bender out at Newton's ranch was bad business. Nettle, you've got to keep those gunmen of yours under better control. They're like wolves when you don't give them strict orders."

"But judge that killing was necessary at the Newton ranch. The old cook recognized several of the boys. They had to protect themselves and protect me."

"They should have kept their masks on," reproved the judge. "Sanders, you had better accompany Firthman when he takes this man out. To the county jail, not to the town lock-up."

Cassidy wisely made no attempt to escape as he was being taken to the jail. Eighteen buckshot are difficult to get away from. He joked with his captors until a cell door closed on him.

The cell was about eight feet square and offered no privacy at all, being separated on each side from similar cells only by perpendicular iron bars four inches apart. Horizontally, at two-foot intervals, the bars were braced by heavy metal straps, the bars passing through holes bored in the reinforcements.

"Plenty of ventilation but darned little chance of getting out," was Cassidy's thought.

He turned. Grasping the bars separating him from Cassidy's cell stood another prisoner. His hair was slightly grayed, his face thin and bronzed, his eyes mild and light blue. Cassidy noted that the right forefinger was missing.

"It's a great country, cowboy," smiled the stranger. "Nice jail they got here."

"You must own stock in it," said Cassidy, looking at the maimed hand. "But you oughta know better than try to catch the jack-rabbits in these parts with your bare hands. I once darned near lost a finger myself that way."

"As a matter of fact," confessed the other sadly, "I lost it helping out a lanky, crazy galoot like yourself."

"Identification complete, as the telegram said," was Cassidy's cryptic reply. "And I'm mad as ——. See that pocket there? Well, up to about six minutes ago that pocket held one thousand cold silver cartwheels—or their equivalent. Now it's gone."

"Gosh, did they rob you, too? I got doped, or something. Woke up here a while ago and found that I'd been cleaned out. They took away every cent I had."

"I've still got a little cash," said Cassidy. "Got what's left of my last pay check."

The other looked hopeful.

"Listen," he whispered eagerly, "they got a poker-playin' jailer here."

"What of it?" returned Cassidy, wondering at the other's trend.

"What of it! Say, it means that both of us'll make a clean escape. Brains'll do more than dynamite any time to get a man out of jail. If you'll stake me, I'll take away all the jailer's money, and then he'll be in a ripe condition to be what you might call an unwittin' accomplice to our escape."

"I'll try anything once or twice," said Cassidy. "And I'm sure a-hankering to take another look at this jail from the outside—from a long distance preferred. How much yuh need?"

"Lemme have fifty if you can spare it."

"That's easy."

Cassidy counted out the money and passed it through the bars.

The other man was a quiet type, possessed of a quaint dignity and a whimsical sense of humor. Not the sort of man, Cassidy figured, who would stoop to a cheap confidence game or downright untruthfulness in order to gain a few dollars. And the man was efficient, otherwise he could not have downed a sheriff noted as a gunfighter and then kicked the town marshal out of his way. Cassidy was curious to see what would happed. To get out of jail was asking a lot, but the proposer of the scheme was possessed of a self-confidence that made a deep impression.

"Thanks!" said the other. "I'll slip this back to yuh if I can get this jailer to play. My name's Conway. In Arizona I'm 'Shorthand' Conway. I busted out of a better jail than this only last month. That's why I'm over in this country."

Cassidy made himself known. They shook hands through the bars, and quickly took a mutual liking for each other.

"I take it that you're the *hombre* who gunned up the ba-ad sheriff?" ventured Cassidy.

"I did, and I let him off easy. Almost wish I hadn't. I was quietly mindin' my own business until he started to try to mind it for me. And what started you on a career of inickerty?"

"Just my natural ability to pry the lid off trouble and crawl in."

In detail he proceeded to tell of the raw deal that was being cooked up for Pete Newton.

"I'm a-goin' to horn in on some of that myself," finally declared Mr. Conway.

"This Peaceful Pete man seems to need a few straight-shootin' friends in these parts. But first we've got to get out of here."

"I don't see how you're gonna make it," confessed Cassidy.

"Listen, you son of doubt. I never been in a jail yet that could hold me. Have you ever noticed that time hangs kind of heavy on the hands of a jailer? And that most of them play poker? Some of them are mean skunks, but I ain't yet run across one of them who tried to take poker winnings away from a prisoner—*if* the prisoner wins.

"And why is a jailer willin' to play poker with the prisoners? It's because he has one of these here phycolligal edges on them. Jailers is good poker players, to begin with. And nine times out of ten the prisoner'll try to make a friend of the jailer. And what's a better way than by lettin' the jailer win a little money?"

"Sure. I see the idea," replied Cassidy.

"You don't see it a-tall!" differed Conway. "Those fool prisoners got the wrong idea. If a jailer'll play poker with me I'll own his socks before I get through. And that gives *me* the, now, phycolligal edge. I get him broke, then I pay him liberal money to get me things I need. And the stores are full of things that'll get yuh out of jail—if yuh know how to use them.

"Knowledge is power, son, and don't forget that. Especially a knowledge of jail locks. It'll pay yuh plenty to take a course in studyin' them. I know all about jail locks, but there was one kind up in Utah that I couldn't use at all. I had my trial set three months ahead, and all they had me in for was my provin' to a man that he couldn't draw faster than me. He died, though.

"That was a new jail up there. All the cells were locked solidly at night by pullin' down a lever in the jailer's office. I got plumb tired of that jail. There ought to be a law against locks like that. Why I had to saw my way out, and that's plumb crude. I'm stayin' away from Utah."

"How about *these* locks?" inquired Cassidy.

"Old-fashioned! As easy as sticking your finger through a piece of paper—if yuh know how."

"Sh-h!" Cassidy warned him, for the jailer had entered the corridor and started to unlock the cells.

This corridor was about fifteen feet in width and forty in length. At the rear it was closed by a solid wall. The front was a heavy grill-work. The ceiling was likewise of bars. It was nothing but a large cage, two sides of which were formed by the cells. The only opening was in the front, where a door opened into the jailer's office. Into this cage, to allow them to exercise, the prisoners for two hours each afternoon were released from their cells.

The jailer's name was Moss. He was short, heavy-set, extremely muscular. He was known in the town as "Short" Moss, and no one had ever changed this nickname into "Shorty." Short Moss was an appropriate name, and held more meaning and humor than Shorty. Mr. Moss possessed a wide mouth, the corners of which turned habitually upward in what seemed to be perennial good nature. But this was belied by his eyes. They were wise, hard and cold.

"Stay in your cell till I give the word!" was his order to the new prisoners.

To enforce the order he carried a Colt. He finished unlocking the occupied cells, let himself out through the door in the front grill-work, locked the door and called out—

"All right!"

The five other prisoners promptly stepped into the corridor, an example followed by Messrs. Cassidy and Conway. The five with the privilege conferred by what might be termed "their seniority" freely sized up the pair of newcomers.

"Got any tobacco?" inquired a bow-legged, wiry, under-sized, squirrel-mouthed individual, obviously a cowpuncher by profession.

In his eyes was a careless, good-natured smile.

"Sure."

Cassidy handed over the makings. He rather liked the smiling little man, and naively envied his deft way of rolling a cigaret with one hand. Cassidy rolled one for himself. The same match served for both.

"What name yuh registered under at this hotel?" he asked.

"Me? I'm 'Punchboard' Adams. And you're Cassidy. I've seen yuh before."

"Why are they clutterin' up the jail with you?" grinned Cassidy.

"Because I *ain't* a —— rustler!"

Adams had a lot of things to say, and said them. Most of them assayed forty per cent. profanity, and the profanity was sincere, heartfelt. It came from an outraged soul.

"And then when I ast for my time," he wound up, "the foreman called in old Stingy Nettle and old Stingy told me I'd have to wait. Then the sheriff came with a warrant. I'd shot off my mouth too much when I should have had sense enough to shut up. I'm in here because I know too much, because I'd have nothin' to do with blottin' brands for old Stingy.

"I could have walked out of here two days ago—Moss *accidently* left my cell unlocked and the front door, too—but I'd a walked into a swift chunk of lead. I'd a been shot *pronto* as an escapin' prisoner. They want me out of the way. But I couldn't see my way clear to playin' the cards as dealt. I crossed 'em by sittin' tight right here in my cell.

"I like Pete Newton; he's a straight shooter in every way. He's too —— honest for his own good——in this country."

"How long yuh been in?"

"A week. I don't even know what I'm charged with."

"But they can't do that," declared Cassidy.

"The —— they cant! I'm *here,* aint I?"

This argument was apparently unanswerable.

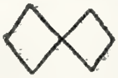
"I'm roped and hog-tied. Judge Shortall 'll fix it so that I'll be legally murdered. Get me out of here, pour a bottle of hooch into me—an' yuh won't need a funnel to do it—gimme a couple of guns and I'll go out and clean up on the whole —— Double Diamond outfit. There ain't a man on the pay-roll but what ought to be here in jail instead of me. And old Nettle ought to be hung."

Adams had gathered an interested audience of six. Cassidy encouraged him to continue, and the undersized cowpuncher gave details of the plot of which Cassidy hitherto had known only the general outline.

"How are they gonna work it?" inquired Cassidy.

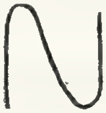
"This way."

On the cement floor with stub of pencil a Adams drew a Double Diamond.



"That's a right brand, only it ought to be called Two Diamonds. And when Nettle quite a while back registered a Muleshoe Double Diamond the whole world oughta have known there was somethin' wrong. Its his vent. He calls it his shipping-brand. It smells—especially when we're brandin' 'em," he grinned. "Look at this."

Again he used the pencil stub.



It was Pete Newton's brand—the N.

Acute angles are avoided as a rule in brands for the reason that a hot branding-iron will make a solid block of the angles. It will burn clear across. A clean-cut regular N can be made only with a running-iron.

"Nobody but a trusting fool would use that brand," resumed Adams. "Especcially in this country. And here's Sarver's Two Prong:"

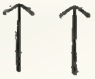
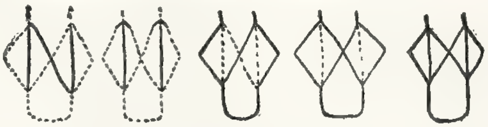


Figure out where the Muleshoe comes in."

"I see it," announced Cassidy. "Lemme have that pencil."

Quickly he altered the brands.



"Huh!" he exclaimed to himself, thought for a moment and finally spoke: "A sizzling red iron will smooth out that curved N of Pete's as pretty as yuh please. If Nettle can get by with that Muleshoe addition, bimeby he'll own all the stock in eleven counties. He can blot the Hourglass and the Cross Half Circle and the Crooked L Two Dots and the J Up and J Down and mebbe a lot more than I can't think of right now.

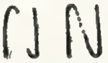
"Yessir-ree! That Muleshoe Double Diamond is a top rustler's brand. I wonder how big a scale he'll start workin' on if he doesn't get bumped off."

"Aw, he won't tamper with the J Up and J Down," said Adams. "He's workin' with

Johnny Jewett on the big steal that's comin' off."

"Don't you fool yourself on what he won't do," stated Cassidy. "This brand blottin' thing gets in a man's blood once he gets started. He's foolin' with the J Up and J Down right now, Look at this ——"

He used the pencil.



"Why that's Newton's brand!" cried Adams. "What ——" he quit in sheer amazement.

"Sure! That's the evidence they're cookin' up to stick Pete in jail on while they clean his range."

He grinned up at Conway and the other prisoners who had been fascinated spectators of this exposition of the rustlers' art.

"By golly!" drawled one of the prisoners. "If I was gifted like that I'd be a rich man and I wouldn't be in this jail, either. Imagination beats a long rope all holler."

"Seems to me," advanced Conway, "that all this stuff about what this Nettle *hombre* might do is like ridin' up a blind cañon. You'll have to ride back down again. All that int'rests me is how to get the jailer to play poker."

"Easy," replied Adams, grinning. "All yuh gotta do is to let him know yuh got money. He's poison at poker—he plays only stud. He's taken every mildewed centavo away from five of us. I've got my suspicions ——"

"Keep them. I've got more than that. Tell him he's got another victim—me."

Conway winked at Cassidy.

"Both of yuh ought to take a fool's advice and lay off the jailer at poker," counseled Adams. "I tell yuh he's plumb poison with a deck of cards. Unless, of course, you can take care of yourselves in any kind of a game."

"We can," Conway assured him. "Cassidy takes care of himself by stayin' out of the game and leavin' the heavy work to me. Single-handed is my game and jailers are jest soft-boiled eggs for me. I plays the same kind of a game they do. If it's square, I play square. And the —— help him if he tries to be crooked. I ain't lived forty-six years for nothing.

"Get the jailer to play me," he said to Adams, after a slight pause. "You won't lose by it."

"Punchboard" Adams borrowed the makings for another cigaret and then walked over to the wrought-iron door leading to the jail office. He shook the bars and hailed Moss. A few words with the jailer were enough. Moss was more than willing. Time hung heavily on his hands and, besides, with him it was almost a matter of principle, to say nothing of financial gain, to take away at cards whatever money any prisoner brought into the jail. He searched closely all entering prisoners but always allowed them to keep their money in their pockets. He stipulated to Adams that the game must be stud.

Stud poker! Conway chuckled quietly as he secretly rejoiced. Scattered throughout the Southwest were several hundred men, almost any one of whom would be willing to take an oath to the effect that Shorthand Conway was the man who had invented the game of stud.

VII

WITH the two-hour exercise period over and the prisoners again locked up in their cells, Short Moss into the corridor brought two boxes, which originally had contained canned tomatoes. He placed one box against the perpendicular bars of Conway's cell and then unlocked and opened the door to drop the other box inside. Carefully again he locked the cell door.

Conway grasped the idea; they were to play through the bars. He placed his box against the barrier and pulled up his stool. Moss brought a chair for himself, and deck of cards. The two boxes formed a sort of table, with a half-inch gap in the center where they were separated by the bars. The bars themselves were four inches apart, space enough between for slow and careful dealing.

Upon his box Moss placed the cards and a handful of gold and silver. Conway obtained change for a twenty-dollar bill, and the game began, with Cassidy and the other prisoners watching the best they could. Cassidy, being in the adjoining cell, had a "grandstand" seat.

It took the wily Mr. Conway about a minute and a half to discover that Moss had brought in a deck of marked cards, their red backs crudely dotted, in the white spaces, with red ink. Mr. Conway said nothing; within a few minutes he had learned the marks himself.

Inside of half an hour he had twice forced the jailer to reach into his pockets for more cash. Conway was nearly three hundred dollars ahead, and Moss was perspiring freely. Finally the jailer grew desperate; it was maddening, baffling; he couldn't understand at all how his own cards with his own private marks on them could go so badly against him. If he had the high hand, Conway quit. If he tried to bluff on high cards in sight, Conway on a small pair usually raised him. To Moss it was uncanny.

Moss finally brought up two hundred dollars in currency—the last of his ready cash. Conway carelessly shuffled the cards and passed them through the bars. Moss gave them a careful cut and passed them back. After Conway had slowly dealt the cards he had a queen in sight and an ace in the hole. Moss had a pair of kings, back to back. Conway covered the back of his ace with the queen before Moss had time to get a good look at it.

For the next two cards Moss bet carefully, skilfully judged amounts, enough to get the maximum and still not large enough to drive Conway out. At this stage of the game, Conway in sight had a queen, an eight and a jack. Moss had a king, queen and a six. Conway, knowing all the time that Moss had kings back to back, looked at the top card of the deck.

The jailer's fifth and last card would be a three-spot. Moss had just bet twenty dollars, a large bet so far in the game. Conway promptly raised fifty. Moss hesitated. For a time he contemplated raising, but finally lost his nerve. From all appearances, Conway had a pair of jacks. Until getting the jack in sight he had shown no sign at all of strength. To be sure, Moss had Conway beaten, but knew that a three-spot lay on top of the deck, ready to be dealt to him. The three would not help his hand and the second card might fall right in line with Conway's uncanny luck and help to beat out the kings. So Moss merely called the fifty.

Conway dealt the fifth card, the three to Moss, an ace to himself. Moss sighed in relief. The ace obviously had not helped Conway's hand. If Conway had had an ace in the hole he would not have waited until the fourth card before showing that his buried card was strong. Yes, Conway obviously held a pair of jacks. Moss's figuring was good, but not against Conway.

Conway's ace in sight was high; it was his privilege to bet first. He appeared to study carefully the jailer's hand, then with what was apparently a sudden burst of confidence, he bet fifty dollars.

Hooked! This was the joyous thought of Moss. He saw the fifty and raised to the extent of every cent he had in front of him.

"I'll see it!"

Conway covered the bet, then flipped up his ace in the hole.

"A pair of aces has you studded," he asserted, reaching both hands through the bars to pick up the money in the pot.

For a moment Moss appeared to be half-dazed. Then profanity reigned supreme.

"I had kings back to back!" he spluttered. "That wasn't poker—the way you played that hand!"

"It wasn't anything else," softly replied Conway. "You were out of luck—that was all. It's been years since I had a lucky streak like this."

"Well, I'll get yuh next time!" swore Moss.

"Sure—if yuh can! That's your privilege. And now I'd sure appreciate it to the extent of a little money if you'd do a favor for me."

"I ain't runnin' errands for prisoners."

"I wouldn't put it that way. I'm lookin' for an agent to take care of my financial affairs and transact a little business for me. There's a big percentage in it."

"What's the proposition?" With heightened interest.

"First, as my agent you get a twenty-dollar retaining fee. Here it is. Then yuh take this other twenty and go out and buy me an alarm-clock. You can get one for about three-and-a-half. The bigger the clock for the money the better. You keep the change as a commission. Then take this ten-spot and buy a couple of dollars' worth of tobacco for the other boys in here. You keep the change out of the ten, too."

Moss smiled, crookedly.

"You're certainly a spending fool—on my money."

He took the proferred currency. After a moment's thought he commented:

"I'm your agent, but I can't see what in —— use yuh got for an alarm-clock.

You ain't goin' no place in the morning."

"I hate alarm-clocks," explained Conway. "I want to set it for six o'clock and then slam it up against the wall when it goes off. I've always hankered to treat an alarm-clock that way, and here's my chance."

Moss laughed.

"Well, don't go a-tryin' to spend all that money till I get another crack at it."

With that he departed to make the purchases.

"Got a ten-cent piece?" inquired Conway, sidling up to the bars separating him from Cassidy. "Oh, yeh; here's your fifty back, and thanks. We've got Moss on the run."

Cassidy found the requested small coin.

"You sure made good on the first part of it," he admitted. "But I don't get the play on that last stud hand. How'd you know you'd get an ace the fifth card to beat his kings? Was the deck marked?"

"She sure was—twice. Once by Moss and once by me. On his marks I knew he had kings and wouldn't help them on his fifth card. He knew it, too, but when he'd rung in a marked deck I was entitled to go him one better. I marked the aces and kings on their edges with my thumb-nail, so that I could read 'em down several cards from the top. That's how I knew I'd pair my ace on the last card."

"What d'yuh want with that dime? You're always about three jumps and a half ahead of me."

Conway had seated himself on his stool and was rubbing one side of the coin on the cement floor.

"Goin' to use it for a screw-driver," he explained.

"I pass," said Cassidy. "Give me five cards more."

"I'll use it to take apart the alarm-clock. The insides of that clock'll get us out of this jail."

"My gosh!" confessed Cassidy, "you sure lay my ignorance wide open. I don't know any more now than I did, but I'm through askin' questions. I thought alarm-clocks were good only to be cussed at."

MOSS brought the clock and then at Conway's request distributed the tobacco among the other prisoners. He came back to Conway's cell.

"I got forty-two bucks left," he set forth. "Will yuh give me another chance at stud?"

"Sure," answered Conway. "Bring the cards."

"Thought yuh would. I ain't no piker, myself. That's a good clock. I got stuck six dollars for it. Only one left in the store."

The game started. The jailor's forty-two dollars lasted him exactly ten minutes. Shaking his head at what he thought was Conway's continued extraordinary luck in the face of a marked deck, he gathered up the cards and started away.

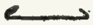
"Tomorrow's pay-day," he declared. "With another stake for a starter I'll get my money back."

He left the corridor.

Mr. Conway promptly tried out the ten-cent piece on the clock. The worn-down side of the coin served as a make-shift screw-driver. Mr. Conway removed the back from the clock and took out the works. Soon he had the main-spring loose and by repeated bending managed to break a section two feet in length from one end of the long piece of coiled-up steel. Skilfully he replaced the remainder of the spring in the works, bending over the broken end to make it catch. Then he put the clock back together.

"She won't run very long, but outside of that she's almost as good as new," he grinned. "Nobody'll miss that piece out of her."

With that he tossed the clock on to his bunk and proceeded to break several small pieces from the portion of spring he had subtracted from the works. Each of these smaller pieces was about three inches in length. In turn he started bending these, leaving slightly more than half an inch at each end at a right angle. He studied them a while, testing carefully the strength and springiness of the metal, then did some more bending. He finally appeared to be satisfied with the small pieces. They were bent into apparently useless shapes. Like this:



Cassidy, much interested and much more puzzled, had watched the operation.

"I ain't askin' any questions," he hinted.

"Oh, these? They're what yuh might call 'lock-easers,'" explained Conway. "I can pick these locks, but they'll take time. So tomorrow afternoon I'll slip these into place, while the cells are unlocked. I'll slip them into the keepers, *sabe*, so when the bolt is shot home by the key these springs will be compressed. I've studied these locks. Moss slips in his key, turns it clear around and takes it out again. That locks the door.

"He'll think, maybe, that some of the bolts are hard to shoot home, but as long as he has turned his key clear around he'll only figger that the bolts were sticking. Just a little coaxing will open each lock, with the spring pressing hard against each bolt. I ain't yet quite figgered out what I'll pick the locks with."

Thoughtfully he fingered the twelve-inch length of spring he had remaining.

All this had been in whispers.

"How many with us?" questioned Cassidy, likewise whispering.

"You, me, Adams—and I ain't figgered on any more yet. Myself, I'm a law-abidin' citizen—almost. Some of these men in here ain't entitled to get out. They're entitled to what's comin' to them, and I'll let them get it—if they ain't got brains enough to get out on their own hook. That's none of my business."

Conway paused to listen, then quickly passed the pieces of spring through the bars to Cassidy.

"Hide 'em quick! Here comes Moss."

Cassidy stepped across his cell to the next one, which was vacant. Beneath the blankets of the bunk he shoved the bits of metal. The bunk was two feet from the bars, but he easily reached between them and stowed away the contraband. He hastened back to Conway's side of the cell.

"What's the matter?" he whispered, watching Moss, who had just unlocked the corridor door and started toward them.

"Nothing—maybe. But I get ready for things before they happen."

Mr. Moss had wrath in his eye and a Colt in his hand as he stopped before Conway's cell.

"You old crook!" he exploded. "Hand over every danged cent yuh got on yuh. I just now found out that yuh marked the cards on the edges."

"Did I?" Conway's mild blue eyes were blandly innocent. "I'll bet that yuh marked them that-a-way to cheat yourself. And your ink work was crude. I got on to it right away. Yuh got a big crust a-comin' here a-squealin' after you've been robbin' prisoners for years. You low-down miserable cheat!"

"That'll be enough!" grated Moss. "Come across with that money!"

He held the Colt at his hip with the muzzle pointed at the center of Mr. Conway's anatomy.

"Hand it over or I'll take it off your corpse. I'll say yuh resisted me. They take my word for things around this jail."

Conway, perforce, delivered his winnings to the jailer. He was forced to turn every pocket inside out. Moss hastily, roughly, estimated the amount of cash.

"It's short!" he said angrily. "Strip off your duds!"

"Lot of good it'll do yuh," grinned Conway. "And a lot of time'll be wasted. I'm a superstitious gambler. When I win a little stake with nothin' to start on, I always burn up the amount I started with. That assures me good luck next time. I got rid of my original stake while you were out gettin' me the clock. That's straight! I just turned over to yuh every cent I have left. Yuh took away from me every cent yuh lost, minus what yuh spent for the clock and tobacco."

"Give me that clock!" commanded Moss.

He received the clock, placed it on the corridor floor, then went the rounds and made the prisoners hand over what was left of the tobacco he had distributed at Conway's request.

"I ain't standin' treat to you birdies!" he growled, glaring truculently around.

He stopped in front of Cassidy's cell, eyed him suspiciously and finally started away.

"Come back here," barked Conway. "I want yuh to read my mind. I'm thinkin' twice as little of yuh as the prisoners are sayin'. You're a short sport and less than that. Yuh say they take your word for things around here. Before I get through I'm gonna give yuh a lot to explain. Smoke that, yuh sun-baked piece of mildewed cheese!"

Moss only laughed. Abusive language from prisoners apparently was only music to his ears. He left the corridor.

"Well, I had an idea of what was comin', but he didn't search my cell, after all," chuckled Conway. "He's got a heart like an angleworm."

"Worse'n that," affirmed Cassidy. "Hey, Adams," he called across the corridor. "Pass these around on your side, then shoot them back to me."

With that, he reached through his cell

bars and tossed a bag of tobacco and a packet of cigaret papers across the corridor.

VIII

THE next morning another prisoner was brought into the county jail. It was Pete Newton who had been arrested as he stepped from the train he had taken in El Paso the night before. Pete was orating as he was shoved into a corner cell at the end of the corridor. Pete was demanding his rights, he wanted to know the charge against him, and his language was far from mild.

"Who's that?" inquired Conway.

"That's Peaceful Pete," Cassidy informed him. "Quiet son-of-a-gun, ain't he—not?"

"The plot seems to curdle," whispered Conway. "Tomorrow night we get out of here, and Pete's the fourth man we take with us. I've just thought out what to use for a key. Wait till supper-time and I'll show yuh."

When Conway showed him, Cassidy wanted to laugh. The means to a way to freedom consisted of nothing more than a three-tined iron fork. Cassidy shook his head. Conway only smiled.

"Wait and see," he grinned. "It's a new one on me, but she'll work. She's got to work. If she don't—well, I'll have to think up something else."

And with that Cassidy had to be content.

The night was quiet, except for snoring in several keys. So was the morning. According to a prisoner who had been there for several weeks, only five things happened regularly in the jail. He specified them as day, night, breakfast, dinner and supper.

It was not until the afternoon exercise period that Cassidy let his presence be known to Pete. He invited Newton into his cell and whispered all the information he had gained. It was with difficulty that he restrained Pete from raising his voice. Pete was mad clear through and wanted the world to know about it.

"For the love of Christmas, shut up!" whispered Cassidy. "We'll get out of jail tonight and crimp the whole scheme. Keep your mouth shut, or you'll spoil our plans."

Pete quieted down.

"So that's the plot," he murmured. "I wondered a lot why they arrested me. All the information I got was that I'd get my chance in court tomorrow and that all my men would be there, too, as defendants."

Cassidy had been so busy with his thoughts and plans that he had forgotten his singing-lesson. Suddenly the idea popped into his mind.

"Say, Pete, let's you and me start a singin'-class here. We ain't got nothin' else to do—till tonight."

"Cassidy, your idea is almost—sacriligious, under the circumstances. I'm worried."

"I'm not. What good'll worryin' do yuh? Now in this here little book—" Cassidy fished out his pamphlet—"are a lot of things to cheer yuh up. Take song number twelve—'The Little Brown Jug.' We can sing that and wish we had one."

Despite the pleas of Newton, Cassidy stepped into the corridor, leaned back against the cell bars, started beating time with his hand and lifted his voice—

"My wife and I lived all alone
In a little log hut we called our own;
She loved gin and I loved rum—
I tell you what, we'd lots of fun."

"Hey, you! Quit that caterwauling!" yelled Moss, coming to the door of the cell corridor.

"Come and make us!" gibed Cassidy. "Boys, join in the chorus."

Whatever their opinion of Cassidy's singing may have been, the prisoners immediately were with him. It was too good a chance to irritate the man who had robbed them of their tobacco, and to show their independence—at least as far as singing was concerned. Boisterously they joined in—

"Ha, ha, ha, you and me,
Little brown jug, don't I love thee;
Ha, ha, ha, you and me,
Little brown jug, don't I love thee."

Those who did not know the words of the simple chorus quickly caught on. They sang it again.

"Yuh hear me, yuh tom-cats!" yelped Moss. "Quit that or yuh don't get out of your cells tomorrow."

Joyfully they ignored him. Cassidy took up the second verse—

"'Tis you who makes my friends my foes,
'Tis you who makes me wear old clothes;
Here you are, so near my nose,
So tip her up and down she goes."

This time the hilariously-shouted chorus nearly raised the roof. Moss retired to his living-quarters, which opened from his office. *Bang!* went the door behind him.

"Good work!" shouted Adams. "Le's have the next verse."

"Better work than yuh think," said Conway. "You've given me another idea—the last I need."

He walked across the corridor.

"G'wan and sing!" joyously whooped another prisoner. "We've chased Moss intuh his hole."

Cassidy was in his glory; at last his singing was appreciated. And so they kept it up until Moss, Colt in hand, ordered them to their cells.

MEALS for the prisoners were cooked by the jailer's wife. He was allowed so much for each meal furnished to the inmates of the jail, and Mrs. Moss collected the profits. They were large, for the meals were rather scanty, and what there was of it was none too good in quality.

Moss brought over the supper. In one hand he carried a large basket, containing a pot of boiled beans, two pieces of bread for each prisoner, tin plates and cups and spoons. In his other hand was a coffee-pot. For the alleged coffee there was neither cream nor sugar.

Moss placed the basket in the corridor together with the coffee-pot. He unlocked the cell of the prisoner who had been there the longest, and was therefore a sort of "trusty." The jailer then locked the corridor door behind him, leaving it up to the trusty to serve the food.

First the plates and cups were distributed through the bars. Then the trusty went the rounds of the cells with the bean-pot, ladling the beans through the bars into the plates held out by the prisoners. For the coffee, the cups were thrust out between the bars to be filled as the trusty went around with the pot.

The trusty liked his jobs. It enabled him to choose the two largest slices of bread for himself and have all the beans and coffee he wanted. The meal over, he went around again to collect the emptied tinware.

"Fooled!" exclaimed Conway in disgust. "I thought I could get another fork tonight. But I got one at noon today, anyway. I asked that trusty if he wanted a cigaret, and he wanted it so bad that he never said a word about my holding out the fork. And I guess they didn't check up on him."

The thud of hoofs and the blasphemy of a cowboy hazing a steer within a few rods of the jail attracted Cassidy's attention. He looked out. The sun was sinking behind the Casa Sol Mountains forty miles away. But a short distance from the jail was a corral into which five steers had just been driven. A sixth one was dashing around, wild-eyed, unwilling to enter the corral. Two more cowboys rode up and assisted to drive the animal. Cassidy saw the brand on its hip. The brand was conspicuously fresh and easily to be read at a distance. It was an N.

Quickly he whispered this information to Conway.

"That's the evidence against Pete and his men, I reckon," Cassidy thought aloud. "I got so interested in the singin' that I forgot about workin' things up to get out of here. Did yuh fix the locks?"

"I sure did. I jest loafed around, leanin' up against one doorway and another while I stuck them springs in the keepers. They fit fine. She's all set—except this."

From his blankets Conway brought out the fork. He bent out one of the three tines, started working it back and forth until finally it snapped off. Bending the middle tine out slightly he started rubbing it against the stone window-ledge.

"Gotta wear about a little less than a quarter inch off this," he explained, after a few tentative rubs. "Then I bend it back in place and bend it again together with the full-length tine into a right angle. Nearly an inch on that. Then I'll have a slick imitation of Moss's key. I've taken a good look at it every time he's opened my cell. Lucky this ain't a steel fork. She'd 'a' snapped off too easy. This iron is jest hard enough. I'll bet my ears that I open the cells as easy as takin' the saddle off a hoss—the locks I put the springs in, I mean."

"How about the front door?"

Conway showed signs of impatience, but answered in detail.

"I think I can open her. I'll have lots of time to try. If I can't, we'll have to get out in the mornin'. I'll let our cells stay unlocked. When Moss comes in with the breakfast and goes past here to open up the trusty's cell we'll have to take a chance on jumpin' him. We'll have the bulge on him because when two doors that ought to be locked suddenly open up he'll be so surprized for mebbe a fraction of a second that we'll get to him before he can shoot. We'll let Adams and this Peaceful Pete in on it. They'll help. They're both desperate. But all this is jest borrowin' trouble. We'll get out—leave that to me.

"Now here's where I need yuh. Grindin' this fork off will make too much noise. Moss has kept open the door to his place in there. It's up to you to shut it. Start singin'—give 'em some of that Little Brown Jug. They'll join in."

Cassidy ignored the doubtfulness of the compliment. He was only too glad to sing, and make himself useful at the same time.

"If I'd a cow that gave such milk,
I'd clothe her in the finest silk;
I'd feed her on the choicest hay,
And milk her forty times a day."

Under cover of this, Conway worked industriously.

And this time Pete Newton's heavy bass led the chorus. *Bang!* slammed the door to the jailer's living-quarters.

"Ha, ha! Good work!" piped up Conway.

Cassidy soon switched off on to another song.

"Will you come with me, my Phillys dear,
To yon blue mountain free,
Where the blossoms smell the sweetest,
Come rove along with me
It's every Sunday morning, when I am by your side,
We'll jump into the wagon, and all take a ride."

By this time it had grown nearly dark. A shaft of light flashed across the jailer's office as Moss opened a door and came out with a lamp in his hand. Unlocking the other door he entered the corridor. On the bars separating the corridor from the office was a bracket on which it was the jailer's custom to place a lamp every night. He would turn the wick low, but the reflector behind the glass chimney that was polished each day by Mrs. Moss gave sufficient light to render visible the length of the corridor. And it was Moss' habit to come, scantily clad, into his office at intervals during the night to see that all was well. Although married, he did not sleep at home. He was a conscientious jailer.

"Hey, you!" he yelled.

But the only effect was to make those who knew the chorus howl louder than ever. Moss in desperation fired a shot from his Colt down the length of the corridor. The bullet flattened harmlessly against the rear stone wall—as he knew it would. But he obtained what he was after—silence.

"You birdies are guilty of insubordination and creating a disturbance. According to the rules I can only punish yuh by taking away your privileges. Yuh stay in your cells all tomorrow afternoon. Yuh don't get any light in here tonight. If there's any more of this caterwauling yuh don't get any breakfast. Think it over, then shut up!"

"Go to ——!" was the invitation of Punchboard Adams.

Moss ignored this and left the corridor, taking the lamp with him. But again he left open the door to his living-quarters, from which a faint light was visible.

"How about it boys?" inquired Cassidy.

"Give us another song!" answered a prisoner across the corridor. "Breakfast is only a joke, anyway. It'll be worth passin' up if we can drive old Moss out of the jail tonight. We'll vote on it. Those in favor of song yell aye."

There was a lusty chorus of ayes.

"Those who want breakfast, the same."

A lone "Aye!" came from the trusty's cell.

"Boo-o!" howled Adams. "Give us a new one, Cassidy."

"Sure. How's this—

"I came from Alabama, with my banjo on my knee,
I'm gwine to Louisiana my true love for to see;
It rained all night the day I left,
The weather it was dry,
The sun so hot I froze to death;
Susanna, don't you cry."

Four of them knew the chorus; the others quickly learned it—

"Oh! Susanna, Oh! don't you cry for me,
I've come from Alabama, with my banjo on my knee."

They sang it twice, and this was sufficient to shut off the beam of light shooting across the office. Moss had tried to shut himself off from the noise. Cassidy sang all four verses; the chorus was twice repeated at the end of each verse.

This was enough for Moss. He was extremely sensitive—it may have been that he had a real ear for music. But he possessed no sense of humor. He was annoyed, angered, baffled. There was nothing he could do about it. The ring-leader was Cassidy, and he had received word to treat Cassidy gently, for as yet he was only a suspect—as Judge Shortall put it—pending further information from El Paso. Clymer himself was on the way to straighten things out. Moss left the jail in darkness and crossed over to his home which was on a street corner less than sixty yards away.

Conway immediately got busy, under cover of the darkness and the alleged singing. His lean arm reached through the bars, his improvised pick-lock with ridiculous ease opened his cell door. The piece of clock-spring he had inserted in the keeper did most of the work. The lock required only a touch of the bent fork tines—and the bolt snapped back.

He had taken off his boots. Silently he stole to Cassidy's cell, opened the door and entered. Cassidy momentarily was so startled that he stuttered in his singing. Then he realized that it was Conway's touch on his arm. Conway's voice in his ear:

"Stay here till yuh hear my voice suggest a song. I'll say, how about 'The Widow in a Cottage by the Sea'? Then you say that you don't know the words. That'll be the signal for you to sneak over to the office door. We don't want these four other prisoners even to know that we're going. Keep singing. I'll tell this signal to Peaceful Pete and Adams."

Cassidy in answer squeezed Conway's arm, never losing a word of the long verse of "Lanigan's Ball" that he had started. Cassidy had a large "repertoire"—thanks to the five dollars he had invested in the ten-lesson pamphlet. For once he was getting his money's worth; his singing was appreciated.

Conway left the cell. Cassidy sang on, dragging out the six verses, with the rollicking chorus between each. He sang for over forty minutes, song after song; his throat grew dry, his voice hoarse, but he kept it up. Conway was having trouble opening the door between the corridor and the office. Hopefully, before starting each new song, he paused, to give Conway a chance. At last came Conway's voice—

"Cassidy, do yuh know the words to 'The Widow in a Cottage by the Sea'?"

"No, I don't. Never heard it."

"I know it," piped up one of the prisoners, who had grown jealous of Cassidy's being the jail *prima donna* and who now saw his chance.

"Hop to it," invited Cassidy. "I'm tired and I'm turnin' in now. But I'll be glad to hear your song before I go to sleep."

The other man started the song—

"Just one year ago today, love,
I became your happy bride;
Changed a mansion for a cottage,
To dwell by the river side——"

Cassidy, boots in one hand, cautiously opened and shut his cell door, and made his way toward the corridor entrance. Conway's hand met him and guided him into the office.

"Wait right here," he instructed.

The only light was a thin crack under the door to Moss' sleeping-quarters, where a lamp still burned. Conway finally opened this door; a shaft of light shot across the office. The singer thought that the jailer had returned. The "Widow" song offered exceptional opportunities to imitate the howling of a dog and the singer made the most of them, hoping to annoy Moss. Cassidy, Adams and Peaceful Pete obeyed Conway's beckoning hand and hurried into the lighted room. Conway prompty shut the door and looked them over.

"Pick out your guns, boys. They're among those on the wall," said Conway, with a sweep of his arm indicating perhaps a score of gun-belts, holsters and saddle-boots, holding revolvers and rifles belonging to prisoners now in the jail or others who had been sent to the penitentiary.

Quickly they armed themselves, donned their footwear and prepared to depart.

Rendered faint by the closed door came the words—

"—if he only knew his sister
Was a widow by the sea——"

Conway placed his hand on the knob, then hesitated, listened, and motioned for silence. The lamp was in such a position that he cast no shadow at the bottom of the door. Moss, entering the building, was unsuspicious. But he was boiling angry at the continued singing, which he knew was being kept up for the sole purpose of irritating him. He was cursing as he wrenched open the door to the lighted room. But a curse died on his lips.

Mr. Conway's sinewy hand shot out, fastened on the back of his neck and jerked him forward. Mr. Conway's foot tripped him up. Mr. Conway dived at the hand that was trying to pull out a Colt.

Cassidy and Adams likewise promptly fell on to the jailer. Peaceful Pete hastened to close the door.

"Now that we've got him, what'll we do with him?" queried Adams.

"Get handcuffs off the wall," Cassidy ordered Pete.

Moss' hands were manacled behind him. Conway, Moss' heavy Colt in his hand, stood over him.

"One yell and yuh get it—hard!" he threatened the jailer, swinging the Colt toward Moss' head.

"From me, too," promised Adams, perching himself on Moss, who lay sideways on the floor.

Cassidy snatched a blanket off the bunk. Pete assisted him to tear it into strips. Moss was wrapped like a mummy, but his captors were merciful. The wrapping were tight, adequate; he could never get freed from them by himself, but they were loose enough to cause no serious discomfort. A piece of blanket was wadded into his mouth, a long strip was wound about his face to keep the gag in place. Practically only his nostrils were free. It was a workmanlike job, but once freed, Moss would be as good as ever.

"Danged good thing he came in," voiced Conway. "Now we'll have no trouble with the front door. Let's go."

"Wait a minute," objected Cassidy. "What do we do next?"

"Get to my ranch," suggested Pete.

"Aw, we gotta lot of time," was Cassidy's reply. "They didn't drive in those blotted steers till it was almost dark. It's almost a safe bet that they won't try to arrest your son and Inky and the boys till tomorrow morning. What we oughta do now is to have a little fun. Those steers out there in the corral were J's Up and Down. They've blotted them into N's as evidence against you. Le's go over and change them into Muleshoe Double Diamonds."

Pete and Adams considered for a moment the possibilities of this. Conway was not so interested. Gun-fighting was his specialty.

"Ha-ha-ha!" cackled Pete, at last. "Tomorrow mornin' I reckon that nigh the whole danged town'll be down to the corral to see the evidence against me. When they see Nettle's brand on them steers, it'll sure be a joke. And don't let's forget about the ear-splits. Change them while we're about it. What'll we use for a running-iron?"

"Anything," said Cassidy. "I noticed a heap of junk behind a blacksmith shop. I'll get a couple of pieces of iron that'll do. Adams, you slip down the street and borrow a couple of ropes. Conway, you and Newton can slip down the alley to back of the stores and get some boxes that we can kick apart for firewood. You can leave your rifles at the corral first."

"This is your idea, so you keep right on bossin' it," grinned Conway. "My responsibility has up and quit."

"Where'll we build the fire? What'll we use to hog-tie 'em with—if we only get two ropes?" was Adams' double-barreled question.

"We'll build the fire right in the corral-shed. It's open at one side. And there's a raft of bale rope layin' around."

"Seems to me it's a mite early," declared Pete. "There's a lot of folks around. And I wonder if there'll be a guard all night at the corral."

"What's the difference if there is?" put forth Adams. "If there is, it'll be one of Nettle's men. I know 'em all. I'll just walk up to him, say 'hello!' and then bend my Colt over his hat."

There followed some argument, started by Pete. The result was that they decided to wait for an hour or two—until all except those in the saloons had retired. For a time, Pete was thoughtful. Finally, he spoke:

"Cassidy, there's an idea a-buzzin' in my haid. The Mesquite County surveyor was chainin' the county line last Fall. I fed his gang when they nooned near my ranch-house. He told me that the line ran between the house and the old adobe where the boys bunk. All the buildings except the ranch-house are in Mesquite County. What d'yuh make of that?"

"Plenty!" responded Cassidy, grinning as a new idea dawned. "There's a war comin' on, sure as ——! If it starts when they try to serve Yucca warrants over in Mesquite we'll have a lot of technical as well as moral legs to stand on. The authority of Yucca officers ceases at the county line, and you know they'll have to put their warrants in the hands of the Mesquite officers. If they don't—well, I want to be in on it. I'm takin' a vacation from trouble, but, gosh! I can't pass up this chance."

IX

IT WAS eleven o'clock when Cassidy started a bonfire in the shed, that was open on the side toward the corral. Three sides of a large packing-case, stood up as a screen, would prevent the flames from revealing the activities soon to start in the corral.

The irons began to turn red. A faint moon furnished just enough light. The shed prevented any one on the nearest street from seeing what was taking place. Two dance-halls, not far distant, sent forth sounds sufficient to cover what noise would be made. In one a slide-trombone vied with a key bugle in the other.

Mr. Conway was not a cow-hand. He was a gunman—shotgun messenger, hired claim-jumper, paid guard were his usual capacities when he drew wages. But stud poker was his usual means of gaining a livelihood. Therefore, when he was instructed to haze the steers around toward the shed, he did it with a club in one hand and a six-shooter in the other. He took no chances, for steers are sometimes too willing to attack a man on foot.

Adams expertly flipped a noose around both hind feet of a steer. Cassidy roped it by the horns. Peaceful Pete gave a hand to Adams; they jerked its hind legs out from beneath the animal. It was "stretched" between Cassidy and Pete while Adams ran in and hog-tied it with bale rope.

Cassidy promptly slipped his *riata* from the horns, seized the horns, twisted and held them down in the dirt. Pete hastened to grasp the steer's nostrils. A calf being branded can make noise enough. A steer can bawl just about as much louder as in proportion it is larger than a calf.

Adams got to work with a running-iron. Expertly he applied the red hot metal, and it takes an expert to blot a brand in a convincing manner. The new lines must be burned about four times as deep as the old brand, and then the old brand must be touched over deftly to give the same appearance to the whole. Quickly he changed the faked N to a Double Diamond vented by a Muleshoe. The single ear-split that was Newton's sign of ownership was slashed into Nettle's ear-mark, a swallow-fork. Conway hooked a thumb in his gun-belt and strolled south, the direction from which they were in greatest danger of discovery. To the north lay the railroad tracks and a few shacks occupied by section hands, foreigners who would pay no attention to what was going on in the corral. To the west was a large livery-stable and feed warehouse. On the east side of the corral and also to the south lay vacant lots. The jail, fifty yards to the east across the vacant lots, screened to a great extent the view from the few dwellings farther east on the main street. The latter, across the lots, was two hundred feet from the south side of the corral. The tin-covered, three-sided shed hid all operations from view of the main street, along which the business section lay to the west.

But their greatest factor of safety lay in the hour; the quieter element had retired, while the drinkers, gamblers, roisterers had just started going good. Conway, on guard, found no action at all coming his way.

There was no wind and the corral was filled with choking dust. Experts at handling cattle were Cassidy, Newton and Adams, but they had their work cut out for them. Twice they roped and threw a steer only to discover that it was one they had already blotted. The screening darkness was also a handicap. Adams several times gave a first-class imitation of a *matador* when a harassed steer turned on him as he was driving it toward the shed and Cassidy's snaky rope.

All three of them were perspiring but happy. Despite the danger hanging over their heads if they were discovered, they went hilariously about their task. They were like schoolboys perpetrating some prank. And what they were doing was nothing more or less than a joke. It could have no lasting effect, for more steers would be blotted and brought in for "evidence" that would be sufficient—with the county judge in on the plot—to be serious for Pete Newton and his men. Their only real defense lay in small heavy cardboard boxes containing brass, powder and lead. Also, to some extent, in the fact that Pete's ranch buildings, now that the house had been burned, all lay across the line of Mesquite County.

They finished the brand re-blotting, stamped out the fire, grinned happily and shook hands all around.

"Horses are next," said Cassidy. "Let's help ourselves at the nearest hitch-rack."

"Nope!" objected Adams. "We're guilty of a dozen crimes now. Don't let 'em call us hoss-thieves, too. Leave it to me. I'll go over to McTavish's stable, hire four hosses and charge the bill to Stingy Nettle. Nobody around town knows I was stuck in jail. Nettle did it mighty quiet. Mac will think I'm still workin' for Nettle. You fellahs don't want to show yourselves at all. If yuh try to get your own hosses there's liable to be a fuss. The same if yuh help yourselves. We want to make a quiet sneak out of town. You fellahs wait here—I'll come back with four broncs."

Adams hastened away.

"Brainy little cuss, at that," remarked Pete. "Think he'll get 'em?"

"Sure he will," Cassidy replied. "And it'll tickle his sense of justice to charge them to Nettle. It's a good joke."

"How about the sheriff of Mesquite?" inquired Conway, who had returned from his guard duty. "Is he a good friend of yours?"

"Rather," said Pete. "He's my brother-in-law. He was with me at her bed when my wife died. She was his sister."

"And the judge of Mesquite County?" asked Cassidy.

"He's so danged upright, moral and conscientious that it hurts him. He thinks he won't go to heaven if he doesn't stick a whooping long sentence on everybody who's brought into his court. Why?"

"Oh, I just wanted to know," said Cassidy. "If things work out we're liable to cheer up the whole year for him. I'm thinkin' about what the Mesquite surveyor told yuh. There's a lot of possibilities in that. I reckon we'll never find out exactly who burnt your ranch-house and killed your cook—and that happened in Yucca County, anyway."

Soon, Adams returned, walking, and leading four horses.

"They ain't much," he apologized. "But they're all Mac had left. There's —— to pay, from what I can guess. Mac grumbled about Nettle cleaning out his stable and then wanting four more hosses on top of that. I ast him how many Nettle got first and he said 'eight!' Figger it out for yourself. Dan Hawks, who's now the actin'-sheriff, came after the other eight. Mac said that all of Nettle's and Johnny Jewett's cowpunchers were in town earlier in the evenin', and that Hawks had depitized all of them. Hawks is owned by Logan. Those eight hosses were for every murderin' gun-fighter around town that ever got a bloody dollar from Nettle. Looks like they're goin' out and kill off all your men, Pete. Near's I can figger there must have been about thirty-three ride out in that posse—if yuh want to call it that. Looks like a massacre to me. How many men yuh got, Pete?"

"There's ten on the ranch, countin' my son. And it ain't goin' to be such a massacre as yuh think—if this gang of homicide artists ride up and try to get the boys while they're in the bunk-house. Has this posse rode out yet?"

"Reckon so. It's after one o'clock now, and they'll figger on surroundin' the bunk-house before daylight."

"We'll start now," said Pete, "this is goin' to be awful rough on that raidin' gang. I figger that if the whole thirty-three of them get what's comin' it'll about make the country fit to live in. I'm a peaceful man, but I sure hope they surround that bunk-house and try to rush it. It was built to be surrounded and rushed. We turn up Injun bones every once in a while. Them Injuns got plumb cured of surroundin' that *hacienda* in the old days."

Pete swung into the saddle of the horse he had picked. The others hastened to mount. Pete led them around the corral, north across the railroad tracks and by a roundabout way to the road that led to his ranch. He was taking no chances on being recognized by passing some lighted building.

Once out of town, they made the best time they could with their none too choice mounts. Pete led the way; he knew it best. Cassidy was silent, thinking. Finally he spurred up alongside of Newton.

"Gosh, Pete," he voiced his thoughts, "this all seems like a bad dream."

"You and me both bein' in jail was no dream," Pete assured him. "I'm hopin' that you only dreamed that about the house bein' burned and old Chuck killed."

"That sure happened, along with them riding after Bill with the simple intention of filling his young hide full of lead. I mean the whole danged scheme—with the county judge, the sheriff, Nettle, Jewett and the rest of them out to get you. And that Bud Sanders. He hopefully proposed that they beef me out of hand. He's the ice-blooded *hombre* I'm layin' for. I wanta see if he'll bleed or spout. I hope he's out with the posse."

"I'm a peaceful man," announced Pete, "I'm agin' killin', as a rule, but I'm —— willin' to forget rules."

"We'd better observe what young Bill called rule number one. We ain't goin' to ride right up to your place to see what's happenin'—not me—not with these nags. We're lucky if we can keep them on their feet long enough to get us there."

"You're —— tootin' we're not gonna ride right up—brash like," said Pete. "We'll take a look—cautious. When we find out what's comin' off, then we'll know what to do next."

AS THEY entered Boca Cañon, Cassidy called Newton's attention to a glow in the sky where no glow had any right to be.

"Big fire, somewhere," he remarked.

"You're —— right it's a big fire—somewhere," swore Pete. "That big fire is right about where my big barn is full of hay. Come on!"

"Wait!" yelled Cassidy. "Take it easy, Pete. I just heard shootin'. Don't fly off the handle!"

Pete reined in and listened. On the morning breeze sifting down from the mountains came scattered reports of rifles.

They rode up the winding cañon until firelight was reflected on a wall ahead of them. Around another turn and they would be out of the cañon.

Following Cassidy's example they dismounted and cautiously peered around a ledge. Their faces were as visible to each other in the glare of the distant fire as though it were merely dusk instead of the darkest part of the morning. Pete swore luridly to match the flames as he watched his cherished ranch buildings going up in smoke. Two barns, the granary and the blacksmith shop were burning merrily. The hay barn roared and belched like a volcano. As a minor accompaniment to this, from the rock and brush covered hill nearest the bunk-house little spurts of flame now and then darted out followed by the sounds of rifle fire.

"The bunk-house is holding out all right," voiced Pete. "Those —— arsonists and murderers in that posse are sure led by a —— fool. There was no sense in setting those fires. Now they can get around the bunk-house only on two sides; it's too hot on the others. It won't hurt the bunk-house any; it's too far away. I don't give a whoop about losin' every buildin' on the place—if I can only land on the necks of that posse."

Pete drew back and started to mount.

"Which way?" inquired Cassidy.

"To Sarver's."

Pete motioned toward the mouth of the cañon.

"Not any," objected Cassidy. "You get out there and they'll spot you the same as if it were daylight. We can't stand bein' chased. If we had some good horse flesh under us I'd take a chance—but not with these. We gotta go back through. Ain't there another trail somewhere's north the cañon?"

"I reckon you're right," answered Pete. "Sure, there's another trail, but I'm the only one here who would call it that. It's a ridge-toppin' thing that an eagle must have guided some one over the first time. If this wasn't an ee-mergency I wouldn't chance it in the dark. It's shorter than the other one, which helps."

They started back through the cañon. Ffteen minutes later Pete halted, dismounted and carefully led his bronc up a shale slope. Then he mounted and led the way up the backbone of an inverted V ridge. The going was dangerous and slow, but with the first light of dawn they were enabled to make better time.

JUST after five-thirty they pulled up at the Sarver ranch, where the cowboys were finishing breakfast. The cook counted heads on the new arrivals, dropped a couple of handsful of coffee on to the grounds in the pot, added water, and raked up his fire.

Sarver stepped out to greet them and was greeted with a broadside of profanity-spiced information from Pete. Sarver turned loose a flood of orders. His cowboys—ten in number—scurried off to the corral. One soon returned with a fresh horse for Pete. Another left on the gallop for Bob Saxmar's. Two others left in different directions for more distant ranches. Mesquite County was more than willing to rise in arms against the rustlers from Yucca.

Pete Newton, his third cup of black coffee in his hand, came out of the kitchen, stopping at every third step for another gulp of the scalding mixture. He set down the empty cup and took the reins of the horse that had been brought for him. Cassidy, also gulping coffee, came out. Pete turned for final instructions.

"I'm hittin' the breeze for Whitney to see 'Pinkey' Vaughn," he announced.

Whitney was the county seat and Vaughn was Pete's brother-in law, the sheriff of Mesquite.

"You can look for us somewhere between ten-thirty and twelve. There'll be a dozen or twenty men with us when we leave Mesquite, and I'll bet there'll be thirty or forty of us when we finally hit my ranch. Pinkey'll have a pocketful of John Doe warrants. We'll come in from the south and west—mostly the south. That posse can't escape on the east, so it's up to you boys to hold them on the north and west till I get back. Boca Cañon'll be easy to hold. The idea is to keep the whole kit-and-kaboodle in that posse from gettin' back to Yucca. It's up to you, Cassidy. You use your own judgment. Every man who rode out of Yucca last night is a rustler or a murderer—maybe both."

Cassidy grinned.

"You're includin' a lot of population. There was four of us, includin' you, who rode out——"

"Aw, shut up!" snorted Pete.

With that he headed for Whitney.

Cassidy returned to the kitchen and offered considerable competition to Adams and Conway who were concentrating upon the task of wrapping themselves around as many hot-cakes as they could. As he ate he thought.

From Sarver's ranch and from Bob Saxmar's, with Adams and Conway, he would have about twenty men. Sarver had stated that the two men he had sent to other ranches would return with at least fifteen more. Thirty-five in all. Cassidy then thought of the ten fighters, headed by the redoubtable Inky O'Day, who were besieged in the Newton bunk-house.

Mentally he reviewed Inky's chances for holding out. They were very good. With its bullet-proof adobe walls and tile roof, the bunk-house could not be set on fire. With the heavy bars in place, it would be almost impossible for the Yucca raiders to batter in the door, especially so as the door was at the head of a three-sided *patio* and exposed from within to rifle fire from four windows. These four windows in turn were safe from long-range shooting. No one, unless he stood directly within the *patio* could put bullets through the narrow apertures, for the windows on each side faced the opposite *patio* wall.

Cassidy refused to worry about Inky and his men. Nothing less than an earthquake, apparently, could shake them loose from the bunk-house fortress. Sarver came in, pulled up a chair and started discussing the situation.

X

TWO hours later, thirty-six horsemen were strung in single file on the trail leading east from Sarver's ranch. A mile from the ranch they separated into two gangs, Sarver with Bob Saxmar and twelve men heading northeast over the ridge trail to the north end of Boca Cañon, while Cassidy and the remainder of the band continued east.

While still a mile from the Newton bunk-house, Cassidy ordered his men to dismount and leave their horses, to proceed forward on foot. This occasioned some grumbling. Rash spirits were numbered among them, reckless cowboys who for some time had been spoiling for a fight. Their idea of real action would have been to pull off a miniature cavalry charge over the brow of the hill and down into the basin where lay the beleaguered bunk-house.

"You —— fools!" snapped Cassidy. "Maybe some of you don't want to live longer—but *I* do. If you bust over that hill you'll get picked off, *pronto*. For myself I don't ask a better target than a man on horseback ridin' right at me. They outnumber us. We ain't s'posed to rush 'em. We're to hold 'em—keep 'em in Mesquite County till Pete Newton comes with a whoppin' big sheriff's posse. *Sabe?*"

They agreed, but eased their fighting consciences with some more grumbling.

"Kin we sneak to the top of the hill and snipe at 'em?" queried one.

"Sure—but don't let the other fellow snipe first at you. That's plumb fatal. And yuh gotta wait a while. Give Sarver time enough to get around into Boca Cañon."

They advanced along the trail until Cassidy stopped and called forward the foreman of the ranches that had sent men in response to the call for help.

"Take three men," he ordered Sarver's

foreman, "and get to the ridge top just the other side of that big black rock."

He pointed south.

"Lay low, keep watching—and don't shoot until something starts."

"Shucks! It's already started."

The foreman nodded in the direction of the hill, over which came faintly at intervals the reports of one or two guns.

"Le's horn right in."

Cassidy spat in disgust.

"Yuh still don't get the idea. This ain't gonna be a rescue. Inky and his boys can take care of themselves. This is gonna be a round-up. None of them snakes from Yucca is gonna get back to there. That's why your boss headed 'round for Boca Cañon. He's gonna stop 'em cold if they try to get back that way. We're to keep 'em from gettin' over the hill in this direction.

"They burnt out Pete Newton—and they did it in Mesquite County. Pinkey Vaughn and Pete are coming from Whitney with a whoppin' big posse. We'll get every one of them. Maybe we can't get 'em for rustlin' or murder, but they'll sure get tripped up when they face that Mesquite judge on a charge of arson—them that don't get bumped off when they try to stop us from roundin' 'em up."

The foreman digested this. His face finally cracked into a wide grin, amid a score of other grins and chuckles. The pickle in store for the Yucca raiders appealed to the cowboys' sense of humor as well as their sense of justice. The grim, dangerous task ahead they looked forward to as a day's pleasant diversion.

Cassidy pointed out another landmark to the south on the hill and sent out Bob Saxmar's foreman and three of his men. After indicating positions for two more quartets, he started again along the trail. With him was Shorthand Conway and five others. Adams had gone with the last group. It was Cassidy's intention to post himself and two or three men near the trail. Conway was to captain a squad north of it. They would be well over the Yucca County line, but recked nothing of that.

The ridge on which they were to ambush themselves ran almost directly north and south and the distance at the nearest point from its summit to the bunk-house was not over four hundred yards. From where the trail crossed the ridge was possibly two hundred yards farther.

On the west side the trail down the gently sloping ridge was far from being in a straight line. It wound around huge boulders and impenetrable thickets of brush; it went out of its course to seek the easiest way to cross deep little gullies. At scarcely any point could the trail be seen for more than thirty or forty feet ahead.

Suddenly it widened out into a little sloping flat perhaps twenty feet square. Picketed here to young cedars at its edges stood eight horses. Cassidy and his men came upon them. They stopped, tense, wary. A moment or two later they heard a click as somebody coming down the trail stumbled on a rock. From around a high rock, Bud Sanders and James Logan suddenly walked into sight. They stopped in their tracks, too surprized for a scant moment to do anything but stare at Cassidy.

Logan carried a rifle, its barrel in the crook of his left arm, his right thumb on the hammer, forefinger on the trigger. Shaken out of their momentary shock of amazement, simultaneously they went into action. Logan with one motion cocked the rifle, swung the barrel and fired from the hip. Sanders with incredible swiftness in a man of his bulk, jerked out a Colt and cut loose as the barrel swung up in line with Cassidy. Both guns spurted flame practically at the same time.

Cassidy dropped. At a range of less than twenty feet it was hardly probable that either man could have missed. But a scant fraction of a second after the double reports of the firearms held by the Yucca City men, Shorthand Conway went into action. His Colt had popped into his left hand and was held rigid, waist high. Most of the smoke was swept away by a brisk wind as six .41 caliber bullets left the gun in perhaps four or five seconds as the palm of his right hand rapidly "rubbed" the hammer. He deliberately alternated on each man. Logan wilted at the knees and went down with three of Conway's bullets in him. Two more slugs from the cowboys struck him as he was falling.

Three chunks of lead, .41 in caliber, had thudded into Sanders. Three rifle bullets had passed through his body. But he still stood erect, Colt in hand.

Cassidy was unhurt. He had dropped behind a small boulder at the exact moment that both guns had flamed at him. The boulder was incidental. It had just happened to be there, unnoticed until he dropped. He knew both men were going to shoot at him. The dropping flat had been to afford as small a target as possible until he or his men had taken care of his adversaries. But his Colt had stuck in his holster as he had attempted a swift draw while throwing himself earthward. There had been no time in which to attempt bringing his rifle to bear.

His Colt came up over the top of the boulder as Sanders, already struck by six bullets, started toward him. Sanders shot again; the bullet fanned Cassidy's ear, nicked a hip pocket and cut a spur strap before striking the ground behind Cassidy's feet. Cassidy's bullet thumped somewhere into Sanders' chest. Two cowboys were blazing away with their Colts at Sanders; three were pumping with their rifles whenever they could sight their target. The puff of wind had died; the glade was now filled with smoke. Cassidy, nearer the ground, could see Sanders where the others could not see through the smoke of their own weapons. Cassidy now was shooting as fast as he could deliberately aim each shot.

Each bullet struck home, but Sanders, implacable hatred in his small piggy eyes, continued stolidly to advance against the pieces of lead smashing into him. He planted each foot deliberately, heavily, in front of him and braced himself each time he took another step. His immense, bulky, beefy body absorbed the slugs, but as yet none had struck a vital spot.

He knew he was already as good as dead, but his dying purpose was to kill Cassidy. He had nerved and steeled himself to walk fifteen feet. If he covered that distance the rock would no longer shelter Cassidy. He would then pump the remaining bullets in his Colt into the man who had upset the plans for looting Pete Newton. He thought Cassidy had managed in some way to warn Inky O'Day.

Sanders continued to advance. Cassidy had shot him five times. Sanders was near, his right hand slowly raised his Colt for Cassidy was now a fully exposed target. In desperation Cassidy aimed carefully and fired his last shot.

Sanders stopped suddenly. He seemed to trip. He fell clumsily, heavily forward, the gun in his outstretched hand clinking sharply against the rock. Cassidy's last shot had struck him in the forehead. Nineteen bullets in all had thudded into Sanders' flesh before one had found a vital spot.

Cassidy slowly arose from his knees, pulled off his hat and in a dazed mechanical way from his forehead wiped beads of cold perspiration. No one spoke. The cowboys hastily plucked cartridges from their belt-loops and with equal haste shoved them into rifle-magazines or pistol-cylinders, meanwhile, as the smoke blew away, casting expectant hopeful glances at the bend in the trail or up the ridge.

Conway glanced briefly at Cassidy, decided that he was untouched by bullets, then methodically finished reloading his Colt. Cassidy watched this process for a moment and from his own weapon mechanically ejected the empty cartridges and started to reload.

Conway shoved his gun into his holster, walked forward and stood over Sanders' body. Then he turned.

"Golly!" he exclaimed. "This undersized elephant proved that where there ain't no sense there ain't no feeling. No sense in openin' the ball and no feeling when we all did our dangdest to finish it."

Cassidy had recovered from the feeling of unreality that had afflicted him.

"My ——! The man wasn't human. He didn't stop, no matter how much I plugged him."

"*You* plugged him!" snorted Conway. "You did your share, but seven slugs busted out through the back of his coat between his belt and his shoulders. Them was rifle bullets. Them punchers sure plugged him for ringers every time. Pistol slugs wouldn't go through all that meat a-tall."

"Come on," ordered Cassidy. "That shootin' will start things."

He started up the trail.

Things started a few seconds later. From atop the ridge about three hundred yards to the south came the rapid cracking of rifle fire as the force under Sarver's foreman cut into the game. Then scattering fire all along the ridge in between as the other groups reached their positions.

Panting heavily from his uphill run, Cassidy topped the ridge in time to see two men, crouching as they ran, on the trail where it was visible about one hundred yards below. They saw him on the skyline and promptly dived into the brush.

Cassidy promptly ordered his men to

scatter out along the top of the hill. Then he took stock of the situation. From the loop-hole windows of the bunk-house came a dropping fire that was fatal to several of the Yucca gang, for in turning to face the new menace from the hilltop they had exposed themselves to bullets from Inky's men.

Boca Cañon suddenly belched ten horsemen. They spread out like a fan from the mouth of the cañon, rode furiously for distances varying from two to three hundred yards, then quickly dismounted. Each man turned his horse back toward the cañon and gave it a vigorous slap or kick on the flank to speed it out of shooting range.

The dismounted men immediately took to cover and started working toward the bunk-house. On each side of the draw leading from the cañon mouth toward the ranch buildings was a rolling flat abounding in scattered patches of brush and with rocks, some of the latter being eight or ten feet in height. At one moment there were ten horsemen madly galloping south; a few seconds later ten riderless horses were aimlessly headed north. Some of them went only a few yards and then stopped to graze. But the ten men had disappeared among the rocks and brush.

Cassidy grinned at Sarver's strategy. Sarver had left four men entrenched at the cañon's mouth and had sent out the greater part of his force to close in and hasten things.

They did hasten things. Some of Sarver's force crept up within four hundred yards of the bunk-house. So when the Yucca raiders decided to make a break for their horses, the greater part of which were over in the brush near the eastern cliffs, they ran a gantlet of fire from three sides. Sarver's men popped at them from the north, at a range of two and three hundred yards. Three rifles were busy at the three windows on the north side of the bunk-house. Cassidy's force shot at them at a longer range from the rear. Dodge as they might among the rocks it was hard for the raiders to find shelter on three sides. Several of them went down before they reached their horses.

And even then, they were up against it. The only direction open to them was south, and to the south lay Mesquite County, where sooner or later they would strike a hornet's nest. To get back into Yucca County they would be forced to make a long detour to the southwest before attempting again to head north. On the east was no way at all of escape, for the Rowel Mountains were an impassable barrier. Riding hard to escape the last of the bullets dropping around them they disappeared over a low saddle back ridge to the southwest.

The bunk-house door had opened. Inky O'Day and some of the Newton cowboys had come to speed the retreating raiders with a few long distance shots. Cassidy, who had started working his way down the hill at the beginning of the hasty retreat, approached the bunk-house. The others of his force were coming down the hill. From the north, Sarver and thirteen men rode up. The latter were the only ones with horses.

"Gimme some shells," was Inky's first demand. "Ya got some that'll fit my rifle."

"Help yourself," said Cassidy, offering his cartridge-belt. "Plumb out?"

"Yeh! Just shot my last two at the ——"

Inky pulled cartridges from the loops as he morosely gazed south past the still blazing hay-barn.

"Any of yuh hurt?" queried Cassidy.

"Two. 'Lengthy' Lang is due to cash in. He got it in the stomach early this mornin' when he stood alongside of me as I opened the door. I thought it was you a-comin' back when somebody yelled outside. So I opened the door. Some of them cut loose immediate and tried to rush the door. I slammed it in their dirty faces. Then we raised with them through the *patio* windows. We bumped off four of them before they decided we couldn't be caught sleepin'. It was after that that they fired the barns. Lengthy has been unconscious since daylight. Bill Newton got the point of his cheekbone badly nicked when he exposed himself too much in shootin' through a window. It kinda spoiled the picnic for him, but he'll come out of it all right."

"Too bad about Lang," said Cassidy. "How about our friend, *Mr.* Rainey?"

"I dunno. We hog-tied him plenty and shoved him under a bunk out of the way. He's still there."

"How about it, Cassidy?" put in Sarver. "There's fourteen of us here can——"

"Go ahead right after them. I figger that somewheres down the line they'll run into Pete Newton and his brother-in-law sheriff."

Sarver and his men started southwest on the road toward Whitney. Cassidy listened for a minute to Inky's lurid outburst at the fact that the raiders had turned the ranch horses out of the corral, then discovered that his own men had quietly by ones and twos drifted away. They were sneaking back over the ridge to their horses, with the intention of being in on the final mix-up when the raiders met the posse coming from Whitney.

"Hey! You and you and you!" he hailed three of them. "Stay here! Somebody'll get a skinful of fight if those blankety blanks get driven back this way and try to make a break through Boca Cañon. These men here are out of shells. You've got nearly full belts. Divide up with them."

Cassidy stuck his Colt inside his waistband, shucked himself of two cartridge belts and started for the ridge. He had left all his cartridges behind, with the exception of those in his Colt and his rifle-magazine. Inky's men might have need of them.

TWO hours later, Cassidy and his men met Pete Newton on the Whitney road. Behind Pete and Pinkey Vaughn rode a posse of thirty-seven men. They were all sworn deputies, but Pinkey had wasted little time in legal formalities. As each new group of cowboys had joined up with the posse, Pinkey had ordered all of them to raise their hands at once. This wholesale swearing-in had saved time.

"Didn't you meet them?" inquired Cassidy, puzzled.

"We met nobody!" announced Pete. "What happened?"

"We chased 'em out. They headed southwest. I figgered they were cuttin' for the Whitney road."

Pete put on a thinking act, to assist which he haggled off a generous portion from a plug of Star. He passed the plug to Pinkey Vaughn.

"They never crossed the road south of here," said Pete at last. "And I'm giving yuh credit for enough intelligence to have watched the road as yuh headed south."

"Thanks," grinned Cassidy. "They didn't."

"Correct," put in Sarver. "Me and Cassidy rode ahead. We was watchin' the road for signs. I followed the gang till they struck a lava bed and we lost the trail. I headed out for the road with my boys and that's where I met up again with Cassidy."

Pinkey expectorated freely, grinned quizzically at Cassidy and Sarver and spoke:

"From what I know of Pete's ranch, there must have been a bunch of men a-shootin' from over on the Yucca side of the line. That's liable to add a few legal technicalities in case we bring this gang to justice in Mesquite County. I'm quite certain that none of you men know who invaded Yucca County or who did the herdin' from the Yucca side. Do you know?"

He looked at Cassidy.

"They were too far away for me to make out who they were," grinned Cassidy.

"That's what I thought," agreed Pinkey. "It may save a lot of trouble. I reckon it was caused by a private feud in Yucca County—and that's none of my danged business. We'll let it go at that."

The sheriff then sent out six bands of about ten men each to scout out the country between the road and the Rowel Mountains to the east. If they found no signs of a gang of horsemen they were to hasten back to the Newton ranch. From the latter it was not much over a mile to the lava beds where Sarver's men had lost the trail. The scouting groups departed, taking a different direction to the eastward. Cassidy put his horse at a fast running walk, toward the ranch, followed by over a dozen men, among whom were Pete Newton and the sheriff.

They reached the ranch, after hazing a fat two-year-old steer ahead of them for a couple of miles. Inky had been boiling with impatience, but cheered up to some extent at the sight of food on the hoof.

"Doggone!" he exclaimed. "I wondered when we was gonna eat."

Food had been scarce since the visit of the gang in chase of Bill Newton. All the supplies had been burned along with the ranchhouse.

The steer was driven alongside the bunkhouse and killed by a rifle bullet through its forehead. By two ropes attached to its hind legs it was drawn up to the rafters projecting from the adobe wall. Two cowboys promptly began stripping off the hide. Sarver dispatched three of his men to his ranch to bring back all the available provisions.

Inky had drawn Cassidy aside.

"I got an idea," propounded Inky. "I'll get a hoss, and then you and me'll ride south over the ridge and pretend we was them danged rustlers from Yucca."

"Maybe it's an idea," grinned Cassidy, "but it sounds like a —— fool one."

"Maybe," conceded Inky, "but them other fellahs missed out on the trail. Now if we pretend we're from Yucca and there's a whole gang dustin' —— out of us from behind and there ain't no way of gettin' back home——"

"Sure," laughed Cassidy. "Le's go."

Ten minutes later they topped the ridge and disappeared from the sight of those remaining at the ranch. Looking back, they could see the column of smoke rising high from the smoldering hay-barn. Ahead of them lay the lava bed, a shimmering barren stretch a mile in extent, eddying endless heat waves in the noonday sun. To their left was Fool's Pass, a cañon which promised an open road through the Rowel Mountains, but which ended within a few hundred yards inside the sheer walls of an ancient crater.

"Now," said Inky, "if ya were—what?"

"If any, as Pete would say," answered Cassidy, sweeping with his gaze the treeless, bleak, burning stretch of obsidian and onyx. "I tell yuh, Inky—if I was in the fix those *hombres* found themselves, in, I'd throw a 'Peaceful Pete.' I'd be plumb peaceful—as soon as I could get where it *was* peaceful. I'd try to hole up until night—and then make a quick, quiet sneak for home. What's that cañon to the left?"

"Fool's Pass," said Inky. "It's a blind cañon. By golly——"

"Sure," grinned Cassidy. "Only I thought of it first. After they crossed the ridge back of us, the logical direction for them to take was to the southwest. Now if I was doin' the thinkin' for the bunch I'd do somethin' that wasn't logical. I'd favor goin' east and holin' up till night. That cañon seems made to order, with this ground on which horse-shoes leave no mark. Maybe I'm wrong, but I'm gonna take a look, anyway."

THEY headed east—straight into trouble. All that saved them was the jagged character of the lava bed which prevented a direct approach to the cañon mouth.

Their horses picked their way among sharp knife-like little ridges of onyx, various crevices, and pot-holes. The latter, ages before, had been bubbles in the cooling lava. One hundred and fifty yards from the cliffs a sharp-edged crevice ran north and south for perhaps two hundred feet. It was fifteen feet wide and about twenty in depth. It looked like no great obstacle until they rode up to its very brink. Perforce they halted.

"Looks like we made a lucky guess," said Cassidy, pointing to some fresh horse droppings a hundred yards nearer the cañon. "Le's ride around this crack and take a better look."

They started to the north, the shortest way around the crevice.

Now hidden in a crevice just within the cañon lay Johnny Jewett, posted there by the raiders as a guard. With perturbation he had watched the approach of Cassidy and O'Day. Cassidy's pointing toward the cañon had almost stricken him with panic. When the two riders started north, Jewett made the mistake of thinking that they were going immediately for reinforcements. He cut loose with a hasty shot.

The bullet flicked a lock of hair from the mane of Inky's horse and knocked Cassidy from his saddle. Cassidy's left leg had not been tensed. It bent as he slid to the left and his right foot, stirrup and all, flopped in the air. Skilfully he disengaged both feet from the stirrups as he fell. His left hand broke the fall as he struck the ground.

Inky yelled—

"Whoa!"

With his right hand he pulled his rifle from the saddle-boot and simultaneously with his left reached out and grabbed Cassidy's saddle-gun. Both horses stood in their tracks, thanks to Inky's command. Scarcely two seconds passed between the sound of the shot, Inky's dismounting and his standing, two rifles in his hands, over Cassidy. Cassidy sat up.

"Are ya hurt, Slivers?" Inky questioned anxiously.

Cassidy hastily felt himself, gave a wiggle or two, then looked down to where his Colt, stuck in his waistband, had been shoved from his middle over to his left hip.

"No, I reckon I ain't hurt," he said slowly. Then grinned and added: "But I got a —— of a twist."

He pulled out the revolver, looked at it, and swore heartily. Jewett's rifle bullet had bent the trigger-guard and trigger up against the frame, rendering the weapon useless.

"Reckon I'm lucky, at that," he concluded. "If that bullet had glanced the other way I'd 'a' been plumb ruined."

He arose as Inky's horse leaped, fell and floundered about on the rocks.

Both men leaped at the same time for the same pot-hole. They found it a tight squeeze. A moment later, Cassidy's horse fell dead in its tracks. Jewett's aim was improving.

Cassidy looked at the dead animal, then at Inky and finally back at the cañon.

"Somebody sure likes our company," he remarked. "They seem to want to keep us here. That cayuse wasn't mine—it belongs to a livery-stable in Yucca—but I always did hate walking. Wait till somebody shows up. They'll pay for the horse."

He examined his rifle and scaled the sight up one notch.

And then came the rush. Around a bend in the cañon, perhaps two hundred and fifty yards from where the two men lay sheltered in the pot-hole, galloped eighteen men. One of them led a horse, evidently bringing it to Jewett. The Yucca gang had hoped to remain hidden in the cañon, but, that failing, were making a desperate break for open country before the gun fire summoned enough men to corner them.

Cassidy took careful aim and gladly plunked a .45-70 bullet at the foremost rider. Inky shot a moment later.

"Better not waste any," advised Inky. "I only got twelve extra shells."

"I'll use your six-gun while you reload," grunted Cassidy, firing again and dropping another raider.

They fired rapidly but carefully. But when their rifle magazines were empty they had only dropped seven men. The remainder of the gang had split, half of them to the south, half to the north. Their obvious intention was to ride around both ends of the crevice and close in on the two men who had spoiled and were still spoiling the whole day for them.

Cassidy and Inky were still safe; they would be safe, comparatively, until the riders ceased their mad rush. Shooting from a galloping horse or from the saddle at all, causes few bullets to reach their mark, with the exception of snap-shots at close range. A carefully aimed shot from horseback is impossible, almost.

"Hot day, ain't it?" said Inky, passing his Colt to Cassidy.

"It's gonna be hotter," declared Slivers, firing twice with the Colt and registering two misses.

Inky meanwhile had reached for Cassidy's rifle. Rapidly he shoved shells into the repeaters, alternating with two shells into his own and then two into Cassidy's.

Cassidy sighted lower with the Colt and wounded two horses. He had one cartridge left. Carefully he aimed and managed to topple the rider from a horse about one hundred feet away.

"Three out of six shots," he blurted out. "Gimme a rifle!"

"Three out of six," repeated Inky, coldly. "Don't waste shells like that. This'll give ya a hint of what the old-timers were up against when the Injuns rushed 'em."

Both of them began picking off the horsemen who had started around the ends of the crevice.

The raiders were in grim earnest. Their only hope was to finish off the two men in the pot-hole. To leave them to shoot from behind would have been foolhardy. To rush them was equally deadly—but it was the lesser of two evils. The guns of the two would be empty very soon. A few shots at close range—and the survivors of the gang would still have a fighting chance of getting back to Yucca City.

From the ridge-top to the north, two hundred yards away, came a yell and a few shots. The latter were disconcerting, even though none of them found their targets. Sarver was leading a dozen men at full gallop. The hundred yards down hill would be covered in a few seconds. Then the rough lava surface would slow them up, but some of the cowboys would dismount and cut loose with their rifles.

The raiders fired a few hopeless, discouraged shots at the newcomers, then turned and headed south along the east side of the crevice, some of them taking snapshots at Cassidy and Inky, who wisely ducked below the rim.

From the south came the sound of scattered shooting. Half a mile distant, making the best time they could over the rough lava surface came a band of ten riders, headed by an under-sheriff from Whitney.

The remnant of the raiders were done for, and they knew it. They stopped and held up their hands.

IN THE middle of the afternoon, with everybody well fed and happy —except the prisoners—Sheriff Vaughn and his deputies started for the Whitney jail with their captives. Pete Newton watched the last of their dust to the southward, then walked over to Cassidy. He looked around at the blackened and still smoking ruins of his ranch buildings, then announced:

"It's danged cheap. I'm a peaceful man, and I'm willing to pay a price to have peace. I'm satisfied. I'd rather get burned out than branded out. And it's a handy thing to have a brother-in-law for sheriff. Pinkey says he'll get territorial warrants out tomorrow for Judge Shortall and Stingey Nettle. Johnny Jewett weakened. So did that detective, Rainey. They'll squawk to save their own hides. The rest of them'll go over for murder and arson. Lengthy Lang'll rest in peace after what old Judge Henderson does to what's left of the Yucca gang when they appear in court."

Cassidy grinned.

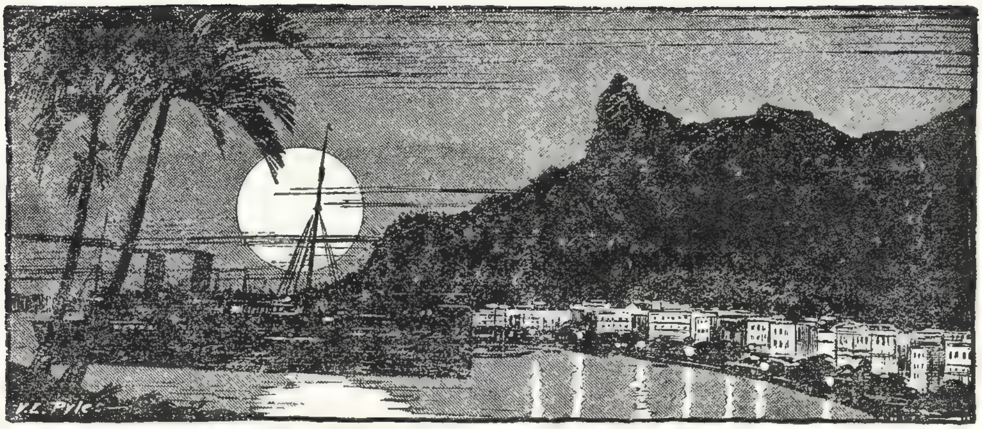
"You're a blamed good sport, Pete. I'm glad if I helped yuh out any. I was kinda scared for a while that I'd get into trouble, but I didn't. Tommy Dunbarton has the wrong idea about me. His mind has sorta curdled."

With that, Cassidy rolled a cigaret and walked over to find his favorite place to sing—the top bar of a corral.

He reached into his hip pocket for his much-valued five-dollar pamphlet of song, which he had as usual folded two ways. What he drew forth was a ragged-edged mass of paper. Bud Sanders' raking bullet had ripped the twice-folded song book into three parts. Mournfully he gazed at the ruins of his treasure. Inky O'Day approached and helped him gaze at them.

"Doggone!" exploded Cassidy. "Tommy Dunbarton was right. He said I'd find trouble. I thought he was wrong, but I knew there was a catch in it somewhere."

"Amen!" said Inky.



One Night and the Morning*

by Aaron Wyn

IN THE brooding gloom that had fallen upon the hushed harbor, sharp outlines were destroyed, making many weird ships with eight and nine and ten masts and yardarms extending out from smoke-stacks. Here and there two lights, suspended in space, told of an invisible ship lying at anchor, while, distantly, small ferry-boats, hardly more than lighted-up electroliers, slid to and fro.

At the left, the Pão d'Assucar, or Sugar Loaf, reared its flat head to the top of which an aerial railway car was pursuing a slow, spidery trail. Near the neck of the big-bellied bay was the city—a glowing patch under a black towering range of mountains, which, except for the narrow outlet to the sea, completely walled in the vast body of water. The clang of a ship's bell impinged upon the thick silence. It was eight-thirty, Rio de Janeiro time.

On the poop of the newly-arrived American freighter, the sailors were smoking and chewing tobacco. It was virtually the first time that they were all assembled together in the twenty-two days since they had left New York City. Occasionally they cursed the captain, who had gone ashore while they were still kept on sea watches; but, for the most part, they were silent, as if oppressed by the inscrutable gloom and the uncanny stillness of the tropical night.

Along the starboard rail, Norvold, an able seaman, was walking up and down. His large blond head, which was slightly lowered, seemed sunk into his huge, bear-like body; his long, thick, shapeless arms hung heavily at his sides.

"Wish I had a bottle of booze, —— it," suddenly growled one of the sailors. "This—" he made a wild, upward gesture—"is enough to drive a man crazy."

"Why the —— can't we go ashore anyhow?" asked another sailor, although to whom he addressed the question was far from apparent. "The old man's got a —— of a nerve not breaking watches in port."

"If we were at the docks instead of way out here in the middle of the stream," added a third, "I'd be ashore all right, liberty or no liberty."

"What's your confounded impatience, you young fellers?" broke in Cary. He was a withered old windjammer man and reminded one of a battered sailing-ship that had been dismasted and dismantled and converted into a barge. "There'll be plenty of booze and women ashore tomorrow." He spat. "This —— place! I wouldn't go ashore here anyhow. And I oughta know what it is; I was on the beach here for three months. It's no place for a white man. There's something about it that gets into his head. I've never been down here once but something happened to some one."

**This is an Off-the-Trail Story. See note at bottom of first contents page.*

Old Cary's low, solemn voice dwindled into a hoarse whisper. The sailors lighted fresh cigarets and refired their pipes. Above the distant city, a suffused cone of light cut higher and higher into the darkness. Dull lights flashed here and there, making fleeting fans of beaten gold upon the water. A heavy tropical scent, coming from the overhanging mountains, mingled with the strong tang of the sea. Half-stifled sounds drifted now and then over the harbor. Against the pregnant stillness and the oppressive gloom, the freighter seemed but a frail and unsubstantial protection.

"Hey-y-y, Braziliana, come here you dirty ——!"

The loud call, shattering for a moment the solemn silence, roused the sailors like a revolver shot. By the dim light of a smoky lantern they could make out a row-boat about twenty fathoms away. It was Norvold who had shouted. The sailors stared at him as at one who had suddenly become mad.

"Going ashore?" some one asked.

As if in answer, he raised his large hands to his mouth and called again to the boatman.

"You'd better not yell so loud, or you'll be having the mate here," cautioned old Cary.

"He couldn't stop me from going ashore," retorted Norvold, going down to the after-deck.

When the Brazilian reached the freighter, he climbed over the bulwark into the boat, and shoved off.

The mate came running aft.

"Hey, Norvold, you can't go ashore tonight; come right back here!" he commanded.

Norvold did not answer. Muttering raspily, the mate watched him and the little boat disappear in the blackness of the harbor, then after a hard look at the sailors, returned amidships. There was silence on the poop for a few minutes.

"It was —— funny, him hollering out that way when everything was so still," remarked a sailor.

"Always thought he was a kind of mopey, quiet feller," said another.

"I wonder what made him suddenly want to go ashore," put in an ordinary seaman.

"——, he didn't really want to go ashore," drawled the boatswain, knocking the ashes out of his pipe and going below. He, too, was a big man, although he did not quite measure up to Norvold.

"It's this —— place," muttered old Cary. "A white man can't stand it. It crushes him till he feels smaller'n a louse. It makes him want to do something to show that he's still a man."

Silence descended stealthily upon the poop, like a heavy, impenetrable veil, like a dark, ominous presence. Here and there in the harbor the lights of ships went suddenly out, leaving masses of dense darkness. At the left, the mechanical spider was still pursuing its slow, aerial trail to and from the Pão d'Assucar. Beyond the city, a single mountain, towering above all others, looked like some vast, bent, black giant, whose gnarled left arm was the chain of mountains that encircled the immense bay.

Somewhat more than an hour later, Norvold came back. Upon reaching the poop he suddenly flashed a bottle of whisky. The sailors sprang up.

"——, you're all right, Norvold!" came from several of them.

"Give us a sip, man," one of them cried. "We pretty near got crazy here in this —— quiet."

Norvold's thick features broke into a smile as he handed the bottle to a sailor. Each, as he took a long drink, smacked his lips, spiraled his head upward and stretched himself luxuriously.

"—— you, strike up a tune, some one!"

"The work is hard,
  The pay is small,
We take our time,
  And —— them all!"

The bottle passed from mouth to mouth. The sailors began to fight playfully with one another, to exchange strong stories, to challenge the gloom and the stillness of the night with their hilarious voices. Norvold stood at a distance, watching them. He did not drink, nor did he join in the reveling.

Cluster by cluster the lights on the ships went out, until the whole harbor became an immense mass of varying shadow, over which dim anchor-lights burned feebly. Only the tropical city still glowed, while, beyond it, the black soaring mountains looked down savagely and sinisterly. When the bottle of whisky was finished, the sailors fell quickly into silence and one by one slunk down the companionway to their quarters. Norvold, who was on watch, remained alone on the poop, a huge, motionless figure staring stolidly at the enshrouding gloom.

THE winches of the freighter began to hiss, to sputter, to clatter; blocks screeched; booms whined.

"'*Ribba!—Parai!—Pouco mais!—Parai! Baixo!*'"

Awakened by the harsh racket, the sailors rose, with sleepy, sweaty faces, and blinked dazedly about. In the glare of the tropical morning the flask-shaped bay, dotted with scores of rock-rimmed islands, glittered like hammered silver under the vast, encircling chain of mountains, whose precipitous cliffs, sheer domes and fantastic peaks and pinnacles were partly veiled by a somber-blue haze. At the mouth of the bay rose the bald Pão d'Assucar, a monolithic sentinel on eternal guard. The city, which seemed to have come nearer during the night, looked blanched and haggard, like a lurid woman in the morning. It was a day old and stale at its birth; it was a stark, white day.

On both sides of the freighter, ten lighters were arranged, like a litter of pigs around a sow. The decks swarmed with stevedores. They were a ragged, unclean, boisterous assortment of men: a few dark Caucasians, but most of them negroes, half-breeds, quadroons and octoroons, with here and there the Mongolian eyes and coarse, straight hair of the Brazilian aborigines. Many of their faces were hideously knife-scarred.

The sailors sat in huddled heaps about the poop. When the breakfast bell rang, a few went to the mess-hall; none stayed long. They seemed crushed by the blinding glare of the torrid heat of the day; they seemed to feel that the freighter no longer belonged to them but to the dusky men from the tropical city. Occasionally one of the sailors would look at Norvold, who was pacing restlessly up and down, as if expecting something from him.

The sun beat down straighter every minute; it seemed to compress the air, which was becoming heavier and heavier. The harbor steamed with ships. The sea was a sheet of dazzling whiteness. Behind waves of heat, the tropical city lay quivering. Its irregular stretch of blazing stone structures was patched with numerous hills, dense with vivid jungle vegetation and crowned by lofty palm trees that shone like silver birches. And beyond it rose the candent sides of soaring mountains.

Sullenly, resentfully, the sailors watched the stevedores, on whom the scorching sun seemed to have no effect. Only about half of the Brazilians were actually working; the rest lolled about the ship, smoking fat, straw-covered cigarets and black, crooked cigars—and talking. Their loud, emotional voices filled the gaps in the intermittent hiss and clatter of the winches.

"That's them," muttered old Cary, "that's the kind this —— place breeds."

"——, they're all mixed up—like hash," spat out another sailor.

"The jabbering monkeys," threw in a third, "you'd think they owned the ship, the way they strut around. I'd like to see them try to come up here."

"Take a look at the hold, will you?" added another sailor. "They've broken open pretty near every case of goods. —— them, I ain't got no use for the company, but I hate to see those black —— doing that."

"They're the biggest crooks on the seven seas," said old Cary. "And they're mean, dirty. They never fight you face to face unless they're ten to one against you. They sneak up behind and knife you in the back before you can turn around."

"Say, I—I just seen a couple of them go aft through the storm-door," whispered an ordinary seaman excitedly.

The sailors sprang down the poop companionway, arriving in time to see two stevedores moving away from their quarters. All their irritation at the fierce heat of the glaring day, all their prejudice as white men against a mixed and darker race became focussed instantly upon these two mulattoes who had dared to enter their quarters.

"You dirty ——, what are you doing here?" the sailors demanded angrily.

"*Não compr'endos,*" evaded the stevedores, edging toward the storm-door, their only exit.

But Norvold, who had apparently come in by way of the afterdeck, had taken a position before it. Upon seeing his massive figure, the stevedores started back, fumbling at their belly-bands. Norvold's long, thick arms reached forward and clutched their throats. Dragging them out to the after-deck, he crashed them into the bulwarks. Two long black knives dropped to the deck.

"Thataboy, Norvold; that'll teach them," came from the sailors.

A broad smile spread over his stolid face.

Stevedores left their winches, jumped up from the hold, from the lighters, and swarmed aft, casting hostile glances at Norvold. He walked unconcernedly up to the poop, followed by the sailors.

Within a few minutes, all work of unloading had stopped; booms were left standing with nets of cargo in mid-air. The stevedores had moved to the fore-part of the freighter. An ordinary seaman, who had gone forward to investigate, reported that they were all on the forecastle head, around the two wounded men. A heated discussion was on, during which angry glances and gestures were thrown aft.

On the poop, no one spoke. The sudden cessation of unloading, the sight of the booms with their suspended nets of cargo, the loud, passionate voices of the stevedores drifting aft stirred the sailors with apprehension. They gazed about, at the freighter, at the dazzling harbor, at the tropical city, and at Norvold. He alone seemed to be enjoying the situation. The vestige of a smile was on his face, as he walked up and down the poop.

SUDDENLY the mate's whistle shrilled. The boatswain went forward. When he returned a few minutes later, the sailors rose expectantly. He went over to Norvold.

"You want to be mighty careful of the stevedores," he told the big blond sailor. "The mate understands their lingo and overheard them planning to get you."

Norvold's eyes flashed. He cast one querying glance at the sailors and without a word started forward. For a moment they did not understand.

"The —— fool," drawled the boatswain. "He can go to ——, for all I give a ——!"

"——, man, you're mad!" cried old Cary. "They've got knives!"

Norvold continued forward, his arms folded in front of him, and his big blond head cocked backward. The sailors rushed excitedly after him. When he reached the ladder leading to the foredeck, he motioned them to remain behind, and proceeded alone. A cumulative snarl—harsh, angry, vengeful, issued forth from the ranks of the stevedores.

The mess-boys, the cooks, the steward, some of the firemen, oilers, water-tenders and engineers had joined the sailors in the upper deck companionway and were watching, silent, rooted to the spot. Every one seemed to have forgotten the fierce heat of the day; yet the sun, beating down on the grimy red-lead of the deck, made it glisten like fresh blood.

"Hey, Norvold, come back here, you crazy lunatic!" the mate's voice thundered from the bridge.

The big blond sailor turned around. He glanced briefly at the bridge and at the crowded companionway, then moved forward. There was no hurry about him. He advanced slowly, casually, almost as if he were taking a stroll. Suddenly he stopped. The stevedores began to descend to the foredeck, spreading out along the bulwarks, evidently to surround him. Norvold moved a few steps forward. The Brazilians hesitated; then again advanced. The sailor stood still.

A hush ensued, palpable, nerve-straining. The incredible audacity of the man had bereft the onlookers of all faculties but that of observing. The mate, an automatic in his hand, had come down to where the sailors were and remained there, watching. Even the stevedores were apparently awed, for they had stopped. In the glaring sunlight their swarthy skin glistened like oiled bronze; they seemed a sculptured group caught in action. And before them stood Norvold, his feet apart, a blond, motionless giant. It appeared as if he too had become enrapt in the drama of the situation, had forgotten that he was the leading actor and not a spectator.

The Brazilians began to stir.

"*Matai-lhe! Matai-lhe! Fihlo da puta! Matai-lhe! Matai-lhe!*" they cried as they surged forward.

"For —— sakes, Norvold, come back here!" shouted the mate, pushing through the sailors with leveled automatic.

Norvold flashed a smiling glance around, then swooped down to where lay a pile of hatch-covers. They were heavy affairs, eight or more feet in length, two and a half feet in breadth, and of three-inch wood. It seemed madness for even him to attempt to do anything with them. But the hatch-cover in his hands moved, quivered, rose straight up, as though it were cork. For a moment his huge, bear-like body shook, but the next instant it was steady, and he advanced with the several-hundred-pound mass of wood raised menacingly before him. The stevedores fell back in terror.

With a long sweep of his arms, Norvold threw the hatch-cover down. It shook the deck and made the noise of an exploded bomb. A heavy silence pervaded the ship. The big blond sailor turned toward the crew. He seemed reluctant to leave his position.

An ugly black knife flew out of the ranks of the stevedores and scraped along the deck several feet from him. He whipped instantly around and rushed at them. They scrambled back, crowded, stepped upon one another. His huge arms swung right and left and up and down, flooring the stevedores as he advanced. There were fearful clicks of teeth—groans.

The Brazilians fought back wildly, hindered by their very number. The sailor would lift one of them above his head and hurl him at the others. Black knives in black hands rose and fell, but tirelessly, resistlessly, the heavy white arms pommeled their owners.

For a moment Norvold disappeared in a pool of dusky opponents. The sailors rushed forward, but before they could arrive, his big blond head rose again. Several stevedores lay groaning on the deck; the others now made for the sides of the freighter and jumped into their lighters. Norvold's shirt was torn to shreds, but, excepting for a few red marks on his back and arms, he was unhurt.

The sailors broke into a tumultuous cheer. Casting a final, lingering glance about the deck, Norvold moved slowly forward.

On the poop he sat down, with the sailors gathered admiringly around him. They were proud of him because he was fearless; they were proud of him because he had vanquished those dusky men from the tropical city. Over and over again they told one another the details of the fight.

"Look!" old Cary suddenly cried.

His head was turned in the direction of the stevedores, who were arranging their lighters astern of one another, with the foremost one made fast to a tug-boat. They worked quickly, quietly. A few minutes later, the tug-boat pulled away, with the lighters in tow.

An ominous silence descended upon the poop. The sailors stared at the freighter, at the nets of cargo swinging in midair, at the monolithic monstrosity in the glaring distance, at the dusky stevedores moving toward the tropical city under its towering mountains. They felt that something was going to happen. What it would be, they had no idea, could have no idea; their imaginations were contending with forces strange and unknown to them, with a foreign land and a foreign people. Even Cary was silent, without information. Only Norvold appeared at ease, unconcerned, and almost as if he were enjoying the situation.

HALF an hour later, a large launch, flying the Brazilian flag, approached the ship. It drew up alongside the accommodation-ladder, and four mulattoes in foppish blue uniforms ascended, evidently keenly conscious of their own importance. Long, gleaming swords swung and rattled at their left sides, while, at their right sides, large black revolvers showed through exposed holsters.

"It's the police," whispered old Cary tremulously.

The four Brazilian officials came aft with the mate.

"You've got to go ashore with them," the latter told Norvold. "The stevedores have lodged a complaint with you; besides, they won't unload while you're aboard. But we'll be leaving here the day after tomorrow, and when we do I'll see to it that you do too."

For a moment Norvold stared at the officers, at their long, gleaming swords, at their large black revolvers. Then, without a word, he rose and went forward. He walked hurriedly, with bent head, as if feeling deep humiliation. Arriving aboard the launch, he took a position at the stern, leaning against the flag-pole, his back toward the freighter.

"So long, Norvold," the sailors called from the poop.

He turned and looked up stolidly at them. The launch moved slowly away.

"All right, fellers, it's about time you started to work," ordered the boatswain. "The show's all over."

"So long, Norvold, old boy, see you again in a coupla days," the sailors called, as they started forward.

Once more he did not answer. But he began to walk back and forth along the taffrail of the launch like a caged animal. His thick features were crimson, and knotted with emotion.

Suddenly he put one foot on the rail and raised his large hands to the top of the flagpole. The policemen rushed toward him, but too late. With a loud crack, the pole parted; Norvold was holding it in his hands and waving the policemen off with it. The Brazilian flag swept the deck.

It seemed the act of a madman. The sailors stopped, horrified. Every moment they expected to hear the policemen's revolvers bark. But there was only a deathlike silence. From the forepart of the launch, the policemen were looking at the big blond sailor with amazement mixed with pity. Perhaps they felt that making sport of the Brazilian police and desecrating the Brazilian flag were offenses too serious for them to settle. Ashore, toward which they were speedily moving, were soldiers with rifles and bayonets; ashore were courts with stern, patriotic judges——

"——! He'll get five or ten years for that," muttered old Cary. "He'll never come out alive."

Norvold turned slowly toward the sailors. His face had the expectant, smiling expression of a vaudeville comedian who has finished his act and come before his audience for applause. And that was the last they saw of him, becoming smaller and smaller, until he was only a blond speck moving toward the jungle-patched city under its menacing mountains.

"For —— sakes, fellers, go on and get to work!" shouted the boatswain, with strange vehemence. "—— it, what the —— do you think this—a holiday?"

He turned to stare in the direction in which Norvold had vanished.

Slants on LIFE

"It *is* —— poor form"

by Bill Adams

DO YOU ever hate the world? And cease to see a beauty anywhere?

I do. I want to die and rot. I don't give a hey-o for heaven or hell.

I just want to quit the whole thing and be forgotten and at rest for ever.

I know what's wrong with me, too.

I'm forgetful.

We're all forgetful I reckon, sometimes. I have less excuse for it than most folks though. I'm discontented. Not with anything in particular.

Tonight I'll go to town and watch the Saturday night crowds.

There will be workingmen with tired faces; and working women with tireder faces, and little children whose future looks sadly troublous.

There will be people who have never dreamed of being able to write a story or a poem. There will be those to whom the money that comes to me for a story would be as Ophir's gold. There will be those to whom my easy life would seem a heaven unthinkable.

I have of late not been sufficiently mixing with my fellow-men and women.

One ought to do that. I believe that we all ought to go to a street-corner once in a while and stand to watch the faces and the forms of the passers-by. Then, thinking on our own fortune we would perhaps step a step nearer to the heart of things.

It's an awful thing for a big stiff such as I am, with three square meals a day, and a good pair of overalls to wear, and a snug bed to curl up in at night to have to admit that I have a grouch, isn't it?

Confession is necessary for our welfare.

I need hanging.

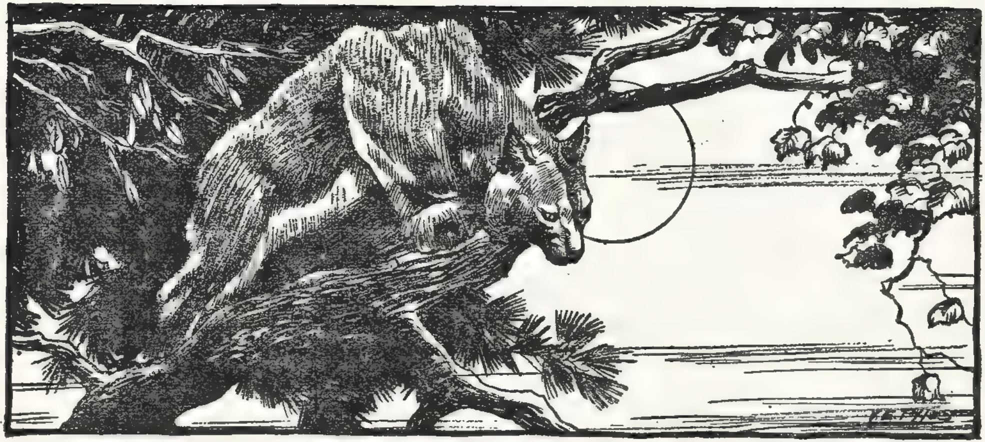
I've had a grouch for several days.

I know a man who borrowed ten dollars a few weeks ago to pay for the burial of his little child.

I know a woman who has a sick man and who, to keep the life in the two of them, peddles soap from door to door, hopefully, in all weather.

I know a man who had—oh, hang it all—the world's full of folks with a hundredth part of my luck.

It's human to grouch, but it *is* —— poor form.



The Edged Tool

by F. St. Mars

Author of "The Highwayman of the Marsh," "Mighty Motherhood," etc.

FOBSWORTH was rich. He had also other disqualifications. He came, from nowhere, without traditions, and bought the best fox covers in the heart of the country which had been from time immemorial the property of the Midlandshire Hunt. He stocked them with pheasants, and he and his friends piled up records—of the *battue* order. Then he committed the unpardonable sin. He ordered his many keepers to shoot the foxes. Think of it! Of course the county rose up against him like one man, and equally of course the county was impotent.

Not so the M. F. H. (master of fox hounds). He conferred with a friend, an American, and the American said:

"I guess I know a stone to cast into your friend's pond and make him sick—if I can get it. But I'll hold no responsibility as to how far the ripples may reach. Let me try."

And he did.

Heaven and that American alone know what powers he stirred to get that stone, but it came. It came in a cage disguised as a crate, and smelling like all the small cat-house at the Zoo—do you know it?—and the hounds of the Midlandshire Hunt nearly went mad when it was stored secretly in an outhouse at the kennels.

How that crate was taken by night and motor along a road which cut Fobsworth's preserves in two; how its occupant was liberated, and how the American and the huntsman subsequently burnt the crate outside the kennels and threw the bars into the river is a matter which concerns those two gentlemen alone—the M. F. H. swears he was innocent of all that occurred.

What concerns this story is that which follows, and since it has been locked till now in the great book of the wild, and told to me only by reason of past favors rendered to wild folk in distress, I give it now, as a warning to strangers that though England's written laws may be broken with more or less impunity, her unwritten ones are best left alone.

PAD! Pad! Pad!

Secret, silent, surreptitious, two glaring balls of yellow-green flame floating through the night, that only and nothing else—nothing if you except the smell of the pines, and the voice of the wind speaking low to itself in the tops of the trees, like a sea on a far-away shore. A pine wood is one of nature's cathedrals of worship, where even by day nothing lives save the great black wood-ants, and by night the wild-folk skirt the pillared threshold on tip-toe. Therefore, the presence of this ghost of the eyes, this silent one, these floating balls of flame was all the more a matter for wonder.

Then it came out into a ride washed with silver where the moon beat down, and the light taking hold of it, gave it shape—shape after the half-revealed, half-guesses fashion peculiar to the moon. One beheld a beast set upon paws, great furry, cushioned paws, so huge that they threw the whole of the rest out of proportion. One beheld a body of some thirty-four inches whose color was of the mist, gray and cloudy, set off with a tail, a bushy tail so absurdly short—say only five inches—and so obviously set on twitching springs that in any other place one might have laughed.

When it turned, showing its face, and there was nothing conducive to mirth in that face, excepting always the idiotically tufted ears. It was a mask, set in a fiendish grin, and in the eyes, the great inscrutable yellow-green cat's eyes, all lighted with that uncanny phosphorescent gleam of their own, lurked a cold, sinister cruelty that made one hold one's breath.

It was a bob-cat, an American bay lynx, and a famous character to boot. It, or he rather, had once nearly died of poison, had twice got into and out of a trap, had been missed and grazed by more than one bullet, and had defied the persistent efforts of many ranchers to wipe him off the fighting list for years. Only an Indian could have caught him, and only an Indian did.

For a moment only he remained thus motionless in the eye of the cynical moon, then glided on between the pillared aisles till the serried ranks of forbidding pines gave place to the feathered tracery of larch, and the larch to the varied soft shade of unfettered English woodland.

Any beast but a cat would have failed to look upward. Be that as it may, this bob-cat looked upward, and stopped dead, his paw held 'twixt rise and fall. You or I would have said there were only bunches of dead leaves gathered here and there on the delicate tracery of the branches against the sky, and we should have been wrong. The bunches of leaves were roosting pheasants. And the bob-cat knew this. At least, he knew they were good to eat by the smell, though he had never actually seen pheasants before; and since the American had kept him without food for two days this was a discovery of import.

Now, any other beast also would have started in to that attack right away. Not so your cat. *He* faded out backward into the shadowy thickets, and for the space of half an hour was no more seen. But he was there: now watching from a clump of briers, now peering up from behind a larch-stem, now crouched flat among the gnarled roots of an oak, first one side, then the other, always invisible, always silent as thought; watching, smelling, examining, waiting for a possible hidden foe to move. Thus did the "Man Eaters of Tsarvo" stalk their human prey. Thus probably do all cats wait and watch before they kill.

Then suddenly he was up a tree. He must have taken to it in deep shadow, and what ever may be said about the delay of preparation, the actual attack was quick enough. He was out upon a branch before you could wink. Followed a lightning-like hook of the great paw, a flutter, a squawk instantly stifled, and the beast was back on a main-limb against the trunk, crouched and watchful, a dead cock-pheasant between his paws. And then he fed.

See now the cunning and knowledge of that American. The madness of slaughter for slaughter's sake is one which rarely afflicts wild creatures. Indeed, the weasel tribe is almost alone in this sheer love of murder. Among the cats it is certainly rare. Even the tiger slays only to feed, and the bob-cat—with its allied lynxes—must be almost the only ones among the cat tribe notorious in this reprehensible propensity.

Perhaps it was the sight of plenty after days of famine that sent him mad in the first place. Perhaps—but what is the use of conjecture? The fact remains that the keeper picked up eleven corpses of pheasants beneath that single clump of trees next morning, and only one of them honestly eaten. How it happened does not matter. Nature mercifully caused a veil of clouds to obscure the moon at this juncture and so one could not see. One could only hear—and it is not good to hear in the silence of night *any* cat at its killing.

It was perhaps part—a great part—of this beast's secret of success in life—success in the wild means to continue to live—that he retired before the first streak of dawn. Twice in his life the first streak of dawn had brought with it a bullet. He remembered that—and man's impotency in the dark.

THERE is not much room in an English woodland for a wild animal to pass the light hours in safety. That is, of course, if the keepers do their work properly. But the bob-cat took no chances. Wherefore when the first uncanny, stark glare began to make tree-hole after tree-hole step forward out of the shadows, as it were, he was six miles away *in a railway tunnel.*

There are, no doubt, people who will raise their eyebrows at this. But, you see, this beast was American. His was the versatility of the American, and he knew, as very many of the American wild folk have long ago learnt to know, as much about railways as is good for any beast. Very quick are the furtive folk to adapt any of the works of man to their own advantage; especially if the said works of man are not actively antagonistic.

It may be argued that the lynx—even though he be American—that can reside in a railway tunnel and live would be unique. Such places have, however, many nooks; places where a man may back into when a train passes, alcoves where tools may be stored, and so forth. The bob-cat knew this; and the foolish habit of losing your head in the unbearable roar, trying to race in front of the engine, had been eliminated once and for all from his brain years before by a "cow-catcher."

The tunnel swallowed him utterly and, one presumes, he slept.

I do not know the precise details of the reception prepared in that wood against the coming of the bob-cat next evening, save that two keepers did not sleep in their beds that night; one fox and a dog of great value ate something which slew them; one pet cat vanished into thin air and no more returned, and a man, who may or may not have been after mushrooms, found himself at dawn, as he distinctly stated in court—

"Rather awkwardly fixed wi' a bull-dog 'anging on to each trouser-leg—*an' I ain't got no others.*"

Any one watching by the tunnel that night about an hour after dark, just after the ghost-moths had ceased their dance, like swung censers, and the first long hollow boom of the wood-owl had gone ringing through the woods as a signal to the slayers that the hunting had begun; two hours after the first fox had crossed the gleaming metals; an hour and a half after the first stoat had followed suit; an hour after the tunnel-rats had gone forth into the hedges; half an hour after the long, gray shape of the badger had moved over the track, and ten minutes after the night express had gone thundering by, a dazzling flicker of electrics and luxury, doing her fifty-five miles an hour on her nightly race to the North—any one, I say, watching there would have beheld the twin lights of another train far, far down the tunnel!

No! These lights were very small, but they did not grow bigger as the lights of a train would have done. They did not flicker, or wink, and they were neither green nor yellow, as the lights of a train are, but a mixture of the two. Moreover, there was no answering roar and rumble—only the deep, hollow, stuffy stillness of the tunnel, and the *drip, drip, drip* of water. It was the bob-cat prospecting cat fashion.

Presently, as a cloud shadow leaves the moon, he was gone—was, in fact up the embankment and in the field above. His way lay, skirting the field, up through the monotonous gloom of a dense oak-covert, till the feathery larch hung against the blue-black sky at the top of the hanger, and, cutting this covert came out on the bleak, blunt shoulders of a hill inhabitated apparently by one bull who grumbled. From thence again he let himself down on the far side—always moving away from the scene of last night's affair—through thickets of holly and ash and lichen-decked hawthorns, and open spaces washed with moonlight, till suddenly, turning a corner, he came face to face with a fox sadly embarrassed by an incoherent fowl. This, and the fact that the fox was in a hurry, argued the nearness of the fowl's home.

Now in a land where the fox is king, a brush is as good a talisman to clear the way as a baton. And the fox knew this, and had grown insolent in the knowledge. All dogs are tied up at night, and there be none others. Here, however, flattened to the ground, ears back, eyes glaring, was—was—something the fox had never seen before.

Reynard carried himself bravely, it is true, and flaunted his brush, and bared his teeth, but—well, cats he had seen, a few, and cordially detested, but never such a cat as this.

Then his devil prompted him to snap,

and it was as if the bob-cat had shifted his right fore-paw a fraction where he stood. But the fox was eating distance through the night without the fowl, but with a two-inch treble gash down his nose—his infinitely sharp and knowing nose. As a matter of fact the American beast had actually struck, but so quickly that to the human eye at least, and under the moonlight, the blow was invisible.

The lynx paused to silence the fowl, but a man using strange language came striding through the night, and the bob-cat faded like a smoke-puff into the thickets.

It must have been about four minutes later that the beast became aware of something behind. This was not the first time in his life he had become aware of something behind. It is a distinctly un-nice feeling—without having any tangible grounds to go upon—that something is silently, persistently dogging your trail. It makes the hairs lift along the spine, and awakens all the devil in any beast, a devil who, I suspect, is named Fear.

The cat turned, lifted his upper-lip in a silent snarl, and hurried on. So did the feeling.

The cat took to a beech-wood, a sepulchral place, one withdrawn utterly from the world, a home of mighty pillars, starred as to their feet with the parasitical bird's-nest Orchis, black as a pit in deep cavities where dense brier-thickets guarded dens of the night folk, but bare as to its flooring for the most part, so that even he could not travel quite silently over the leaf-embittered soil. There were strange uncanny whisperings and rustlings above, the stirring of thousands upon thousands of roosting wood-pigeons, and the stagnant air beneath was sick with the reek of pigeon diphtheria.

Here the bob-cat turned, ran to his left some six yards, and turning again half round, returned on a parallel with his own trail, but to the left of it, the end of which manoeuver brought him to a brier-patch within a yard of which he had passed a minute before. Then the brier-patch swallowed him up, he and the very slight rustling he had made, and there was nothing to break the awful brooding silence of the place save the snores and shufflings of such pigeons as were unwell.

An owl came—you could see the shadow passing across the great gnarled trunks, but there was no sound, of course, since owls fly noiselessly—and there was a sudden noise as of trouble among the branches. The pigeons murmured as of a sleeping multitude partly disturbed by thunder, and the owl went away again silently as it had come—but not alone. A pigeon—already smitten with disease—went with it. A red bank-vole came out and danced a mad dance in the moonlight, a crazy dance of fear, till a little snaky, flat-headed weasel, with eyes like rubies, sprang forth and removed it. After that followed a great hush.

Suddenly the bob-cat, whose wonderful eyes had missed nothing of either owl or vole drama, turned his head, and his ears flattened. An evil snarl, more than usually evil because silent, bared his fangs, and his absurd, bushy apology-tail twitched slowly. A sound as of something clumsy running upon dead leaves had entered the wood, and any there—oh, yes, a wood has many eyes at night, as at all times—could have told you that he who came was no child of the wild. No wild folk would dare to have made that noise, and hoped to live.

Very slowly the bob-cat sank down and down till he seemed to be bodily shrinking into the ground, and there remained, like unto a dead thing. The patterings came nearer and there was an impatient, low whimper. Next instant a blue and mottled dog, not so much big, as rough and hefty, came swinging along at a hand-gallop, following the bob-cat's trail. He swept past the brier-patch where the cat lay, and as if it had been thistledown and blown aloft by a sudden gust of wind, the lynx uprose. If one thing could be more amazing than his lightness, which, by the way, was always apparent, it was his quickness. They found what was left of that dog next day.

About forty minutes later the bob-cat was drifting along serried-ranked tree-boles of what might be termed Fobsworth's "holy of holies." Here, in this covert nearest his house, he always looked for his biggest "bags," and got them. Here were the best pheasants, the cherished Mongolian cross-breds, turned down; here were vermin most scientifically "improved" off the place, and here by the same token were the birds most closely packed; especially was this the case before a big day when extra birds were "turned down."

It was, however, the M. F. H.'s good luck, and in no way due to the American's planning, that the bob-cat should arrive at that wood the very night before one of Fobsworth's big days.

His nose, and his whiskers, which told the bob-cat of the fact that the tree-boughs were literally laden with pheasants, like apple-trees in autumn, told him, also, that there were other creatures there less innocent than pheasants. Careful investigation —a miraculous crawling, belly flat—of a light burning steadily in a "ride" disclosed a keeper, and a dog—black and forbidding. Both were asleep, however. Two more lights discovered later revealed nothing more terrible than a collection of dazed moths, and a gaping, fascinated blackbird, for they had been placed there merely to frighten foxes.

Six times had the cat stopped dead during his survey of this wood, each time to walk most carefully round, and still more carefully mark the whereabout of an innocent-looking bunch of leaves, a scattering of moss, a layer of twigs, or a fallen spray of nuts, all most innocent, all most natural—till you smelt them, and then and thereafter to be avoided like the plague.

The smell was of man—one keeper had used aniseed on gloves, but the bob-cat knew it for a cheat and no true smell of the woods—and of man's handiwork. An open-jawed steel trap grinned beneath each of these natural objects.

Then the bob-cat got to work. Mind you, there was no sound. Not at any time during the next few hours could any one listening most intently in that wood, have suspected the game that was going on behind the cloaked night, and the soft sigh of the wind in the tree-tops. Not even within five yards could any one have heard more than a light pad, an instantly silenced flutter, and a low, ceaseless, and horrible purring. Pheasant after pheasant must have waked up suddenly with that diabolical purring in its ears, and, with it as their death-knell, still more suddenly gone to sleep again—for ever.

The first of the bats—and little pipistrelle-bats that fly only at sunset and dawn —came out for their dawn flight, and that long, lean, chill wind that runs before the day sighed through the wood. Then the bob-cat came down from his killing, wild-eyed, fierce, all red about the face, and strangely excited with the madness of slaughter. He sought his tunnel at a gallop, a most extraordinary, bounding gait, so that as he went along, alternately straightening and tucking up those huge furry paws of his that seemed to have been designed for an animal two sizes larger, he looked like some great bouncing ball of—smoke. Yes, there is no other word for it. This big, soundless, gray shadowy beast seen alternately in the dimness, flickering between the buttressed tree-boles, looked oddly like smoke.

It was already late for such as he to be abroad, for no calamity is so great for those prowling night folk as to be surprized by the wide-eyed day. No beast, indeed, knew this better than he, so that it must be put down to the intoxication of slaughter that made him pause at a sheep-fold and slay a sickly ewe. This was foolish because the ewe was not a great way from his lair, and the slaying of sheep in England is not as a rule taken in silence.

AN EXPRESS was just thundering into the tunnel, and the last of the badgers—badgers are more numerous in some places than most people have any idea of—was just shambling across the metals after the passage of the train, when he dropped down the slope of the cutting into his tunnel, and—barged clean into the legs of a plate-layer coming out. Came instantly winged words, a sudden diabolical spitting, a scuffle, a yell, and a fall. Then after a bit, the man picked himself up, and hurried on to find a doctor. His assailant had vanished into the blackness, but, although it was too dark for him to see what manner of beast he had happened on, as the doctor said—

"You can't persuade *me* that any cat in this country left those teeth and claw marks, my man."

The plate-layer swore. He had no desire to persuade anybody anything. The pain was occupying most of his attention just then, and what was left of it was bound up in a deep desire to view the carcass of his attacker.

Six miles away a worried-looking head-keeper, hastily roused from bed, was using language that shocked the pure morning air as a white faced under-keeper conducted him round Fobsworth's home covert with the air of a sexton showing one round a graveyard. It was most certainly a paralyzing sight for any keeper. Pheasants lay anywhere and everywhere, under trees in which they had roosted for the most part, and they were without even a breath of life at all. Most of the remainder, moved by one knows not what instinct—I doubt if birds can smell much—and in spite of quite six men posted at intervals and yelling wildly, were leaving the wood as men steal away from a plague center.

I won't tell you what Fobsworth said to the head-keeper when the big shoot was over and his party had made a record certainly; but a record the wrong way, a record light "bag."

A head-keeper, after all, has his feelings, and 'tis said this one's hair turned gray from that day. I think they shot eleven pheasants—pheasants, not brace—in the double drive of that wood, instead of about three hundred. It was not so much what the cat had wantonly murdered, though that was bad enough—it was what he had frightened away that caused the catastrophe.

"We will," said Fobsworth, "keep the pheasants for next month's shoot in pens, so as to make things doubly sure, and turn them out in the morning."

Strange to relate, too, it was on that very day that the Midlandshire Hunt, hunting the country between Fobsworth's domain and the tunnel, ran into and killed a dizzy and half-crazy fox with the right side of his muzzle scarred like a gridiron—a red hot gridiron. The M. F. H. looked at the huntsman, and the huntsman looked at the M. F. H. Then they gave that Fox to the clamoring pack "mask" and all—especially the "mask"—very quickly indeed, before any one could see.

"What does it mean?" gasped the M. F. H.

"Well, sir. If I may be allowed to make an observation, it's one o' them ripples as your American friend spoke of," the huntsman muttered.

And the M. F. H. was dumb.

And from that day to the occasion of Fobsworth's second big shoot a month hence, the wild folk of that country lay as truly under the paw of the lynx as if he had been king, and even men groaned. Six foxes were violently done to death before they learned that they were not kings after all, and had better make way quickly; three ewes and a goat died suddenly at night, and Fobsworth's pheasants dwindled like swallows in Autumn. Poison, traps, rifles, search-parties—all were of no avail. The terror was a night terror essentially, and none could find him by day.

In the pit-like blackness of the tunnel, lulled by the roar and thunder of trains, disturbed, it may be, a little by the streaked, flickering glare of lighted carriage-windows, or turned suddenly to a bundle of curved steel springs as the unwinking yellow-green orbs were flashed round in the direction of some plate-layer's hollow football, or surreptitious rat's quick pattering, this bob-cat, this lynx of America passed the light hours. Like airmen, wild creatures sleep much, and when they are awake they "live" in the strict sense of the word, more than human beings. The romping roar of trains did not even so much as wake the beast curled in his recess, but the ringing fall of a pick a quarter of a mile away would jerk him ready to fight or flee before the sound ceased.

There were moths in the tunnel, and bats, and frogs, or toads in holes. Also there were mice, but the main population appeared to consist of rats who fed mainly—like the prairie-wolves of the bob-cat's native land—on such refuse as the trains and men working on the line discarded. The fact of the presence of this great cat, however, had gone forth mysteriously from end to end of the tunnel, so that the rats foraged circumspectly after the first day.

This more or less floating population of the tunnel, however, made it possible for the lynx, by dint of much patience, to scrape together a meal of sorts whenever things got too hot outside. It also made it possible for people, not knowing any of them where he hid, to think him dead, and relax a little of the ceaseless patrolling of woods and sheep pastures in his honor.

One night balls of fire appeared in the black mouth of the tunnel as before and at about the same time, but not the same mouth. He chose this time to leave at the other end, and with redoubled caution.

It happened to be the night before Fobsworth's second big shoot, when, as you may remember, the pheasants intended for the sport were carefully penned up in security till wanted. It was a night of heavy wind, and occasional short savage rushes of cold rain. The lynx hated both, but he had got sick of rat and toad. No one but an amazed weasel saw his going, and none but the wood-owls—whose ears are the quickest of all nature's children, quick enough even to hear the passage of this gray-ghostly vision—marked his passage. They knew how he drifted down the leeward side of the thick-set railway hedge, and how he stopped, sniffed, and suddenly seemed to shake with rage, rage at as tempting and fresh a piece of meat as you ever saw lying in the light of the fitful, harassed moon.

That was the work of the plate-layer, I think, though he kept his own counsel about it, and I know he had no idea what manner of beast he had poisoned it for. The wood-owls marked, too, how he turned off at the double-hedge that ran up the hill, and by the panicking of the very few rabbits out on this rough night, and the sudden explosion of a domestic cat clean demented with fright from about the middle of the hedge, were able to follow his hidden progress.

Once in the great dappled shade of the beech-wood, however, even the wood owls could not follow him longer, by reason of the thunder of the huge boughs fighting with all their mighty strength against their great enemy, the wind. It was in this wood, and as near as might be its center, that he met the man.

Possibly the very battle of the boughs, which so effectually swallowed the whisper of his own airy foot-fall on dead leaves, and filled the place with wildly wrestling shadows, betrayed him. It may have been too, the impossibility of unraveling the whirling scents and smells of the night. More likely, however, it was the motionlessness of the man that did it. Animals and birds cannot, usually, pick out the still form from its surroundings as man can.

Be these things as they may, he was within ten yards of a rather thin beech treebole before the bole suddenly moved, and he discovered his mistake. Instantly, without a fraction of a second's pause, as if he had expected this happening all along and was prepared for it instead of being taken completely by surprize, he bounded to one side, rebounded again, and—was no more. It was marvelous, that practically instantaneous disappearance—marvelous and startling.

At the same moment a stab of flame licked out into the night, and the silences were shattered like broken glass—all to atoms. But the man fired too late. He was a quick shot, wonderfully quick, but—well, he was dealing with an American bay-lynx, and when you deal with those gentry it is not seconds which count, it is fractions of seconds.

At the same moment, too, a big, massive brute of a bulldog leaped forward and fell upon the scent, and that looked bad for the lynx, because when a bulldog discovers—as man does not yet appear to have discovered—that he has really the *finest nose of any living breed of dog*, he is likely to stick to the trail as he sticks to his foe with his jaws, and that is most uncomfy for the trailee.

He followed it all night, not as a hound would, impetuous as a schoolboy, but slowly, quietly, patiently. He followed it to the place where the pheasants were penned ready for next day's shoot; he unraveled it from among the carcasses of eleven slain pheasants—all the rest got out by morning through the gaps made in the wire-netting by lynx and dog; he followed it to another wood where it hung strong on the carcass of a hare; he traced it to a bare, bleak upland where, in a sheep-fold, two ewes lay dying in a pool of their own blood, and finally, just before dawn, he hunted the trail down to the railway tunnel, and—*went in.*

HE NEVER came out again, that dog. Nor did the lynx. No man ever saw or heard of either of them any more. It was as if the tunnel had swallowed them utterly. They were one hour, and the next they were not. What were the details of the terrific and awful battle which must have raged there in the grim, unpitying darkness no man knows, or ever will know. The tunnel holds its secret securely.

But really it did not matter—men said it did not matter. Fobsworth, wild with chagrin at this last blow to his pheasants, sold his land, coverts and all, and the man who bought it is today joint Master of the Midlandshire Hunt. Nevertheless, scorning all that men said, it was the man who sent Fobsworth's head-keeper a check for ten pounds in compensation for the loss of his dog, and it was the Midlandshire Hunt that subscribed to, and caused to be erected, a small white tombstone at the mouth of that tunnel, with the inscription—

In memory of two brave beasts who rode a straight line and died like—huntsmen.

You can see that little tombstone to this day if you know where to look.

A Five-Part Story Part I

by Arthur D. Howden Smith

Porto Bello Gold

Author of "Swain's End," "Swain Jarl-Maker," etc.

To R. L. S.

Oh, Tusitala, you who lie
"Under the wide and starry sky"
On that Samoan hill,
Think not this wretched, miswrought tale
Is meant to breast the thundering gale
Of your great art and skill—
As well the humble trading bark
Might soar to cloudland with the lark!
Be patient, sir, until
We meet on some far height of dreams,
And I explain just why it seems
John Silver's with us still,
And all the raffish, ruffian crew
That you and young Jim Hawkins knew—
Louis, they could not die!

CHAPTER I

MY FATHER'S SECRET

I WAS in the counting-room, talking with Peter Corlaer, the chief of our fur-traders—he was that very day come down-river from the Iroquois country—when the boy, Darby, ran in from the street.

"The Bristol packet is in, Master Robert," he cried. "And, oh, sir, the watermen do say there be a pirate ship off the Hook!"

I remember I laughed at the combination of awe and delight in his face. He was a raw, bog-trotting bit of a gossoon we had bought at the last landing of bonded folk, and he talked with a brogue that thickened whenever he grew excited.

"For the packet, I do not doubt you, Darby," I answered. "But you must show me the pirate."

Peter Corlaer chuckled in his quiet, rumbling way, his huge belly waggling before him beneath his buckskin hunting-shirt, for all the world like a monster mold of jelly.

"*Ja, ja,* show us der pirates," he jeered.

Darby flared up in a burst of Irish temper that matched his tangled red hair.

"I would I were a pirate and had you at my mercy, you butter-tub!" he raged. "I'll warrant you'd tread the plank!"

Peter gravely extracted his hunting-knife, seized Darby's flaming locks and despite his wriggles went through the motions of scalping him.

"If I tread der plank, first I take your hair, *ja,*" he commented.

"Not if I had my growth," snapped Darby.

"T'ree growths you must get to fight me, Darby," rejoined Peter placidly. "You better ask Mr. Ormerod dot he let you come with me into the Iroquois country. We make a forest-runner out of you—*ja!* Dot's better than a pirate."

Darby contemplated this, drawing a circle on the floor with the toe of one boot.

"No," he decided finally. "I'd rather be a pirate. I know nothing of your forest, but the sea—ah, that's the life for me! And sure, a pirate has more of traveling and adventure than a forest-runner, with none but red savages and wild beasts to combat. No, no, Master Peter, I am for the pirates, and I care not how soon it may be."

"It will be long, not soon, Darby," said I. "Have you done the errands my father set you?"

"Every one," answered he.

"Very well. Then get you into the storeroom and sort over the pelts Peter fetched in. Even a pirate must work."

He flung off with a scowl as I turned to Peter.

"My father will wish to know the packet has arrived," I said. "Will you go with me to the Governor's? The Council must be on the point of breaking up, for they have been sitting since noon."

Peter heaved his enormous body erect. And I marveled, as always after a period of absence, at his proportions. To one who did not know him he seemed a butter-tub of a man, as Darby had called him—a mass of tallow, fat limbs, a pork-barrel of a trunk, a fat slab of a face upon which showed tiny, insignificant features grotesquely at variance with the rest of his bulk. His little eyes peered innocently between rolls of fat which all but masked them. His nose was a miniature dab, above a mouth a child might have owned.

But under his layers of blubber were concealed muscles of forged steel, and he was capable of the agility of a catamount. The man had not lived on the frontier who could face him bare-handed and escape.

"*Ja*," he said simply. "We go."

He stood his musket in a corner and slipped off powder-horn and shot-pouch the while I donned hat and greatcoat, for the air was still chilly and there was a scum of snow on the ground. We passed out into Pearl Street and walked westward to Hanover Square, and there on the farther side of the Square I spied my father, with Governor Clinton and Lieutenant-Governor Colden.

And it made my heart warm to see how these and several other gentlemen hung upon his words. There had been those who slandered him during the uproar over the '45, for he was known to have been a Jacobite in his youth; but his friends were more powerful than his enemies, and I joy to think that he was not the least influential of those of our leaders who held New York loyal to King George when many were for casting in our fortunes with the Pretender.

He saw Peter and me as we approached and waved us to him, but at the same moment there was a slight disturbance on the eastward side of the Square, and another little group of men came into view surrounding a grizzled, ruddy-cheeked old fellow, whose salt-stained blue coat spoke as eloquently of the sea as did his rolling gait. I could hear his hoarse, roaring voice clear across the Square—

"—ran him tops'ls down; —— my eyes, I did; and when I get to port what do I find, but not a King's ship within——"

My father interrupted him:

"What's this, Captain Farraday? Do you speak of being chased? I had thought we were at peace with the world."

Captain Farraday discarded the listeners who had attended him so far and stumped across the Square, bellowing his answer in tones which brought shopkeepers to their doors and women's heads from upper windows.

"Chased? That I was, Master Ormerod, by as ——, scoundrelly a pirate as flouts the King's majesty i' the ——"

Here he perceived who accompanied my father. Off came his hat, and he made an awkward bow.

"Your sarvent, your Excellency! My duty, Master Colden! But I have no words to withdraw, for all I did not see who was by to hear me. Aye, there is more to be said, much more; and matters have come to a pretty pass when the rascals come north to these ports."

Peter Corlaer and I joined the little group of merchants who were with the Governor, and the other curious persons hovered as close as they dared.

"But I find this hard to give credence to, captain," said Governor Clinton pleasantly enough. "Pirates? In these latitudes? We have not been bothered by such of late."

Captain Farraday wagged his head stubbornly.

"That's true enough, I grant your Excellency; and since the peace we have not been bothered by French privateers, neither. But the day'll come we fight the French again, and then the letters of marque will be scouring the Atlantic north and south. And by the same token, sir, I bid you remember the pirates are always with us, and clever ——s they are, too; for if they find their trade falling off in one part they are away at once elsewhere. And the first you know of them is a score of missing ships and a mariner like myself lucky enough to give them the slip."

"You may be right," acknowledged the Governor. "Tell us more of your experience. Did you have sight of the ship which pursued you?"

"Sight? Marry, that I did; and uncomfortable close, your Excellency. She came up with a so'easter two days past, and at the first I made her out for a King's frigate by the top-hamper she carried."

"A frigate?" protested Master Colden. "So big as that?"

"Aye, sir, my master! And if I have any eye for a ship's lines and canvas she was none other than the *Royal James* that chased me three days together when I was home-bound from the West Indies in '43."

"That would be the vessel of the fellow known usually as Captain Rip-Rap," spoke up my father, and there was a quality in his voice which led me to regard him closely.

It was manifest that he labored in the grip of some strong emotion; but the only indication of this in his face was a slight rigidity of feature, and none of the others marked it. I was the more amazed because my father was a man of iron nerves, and also, though his earlier years had been starred with a series of extraordinary adventures, so far as I knew, he had had nothing to do with the sea.

"True for you, Master Ormerod," answered Captain Farraday; "and since Henry Morgan died there hath not lived a more complete rogue. One of my mates was taken by him off Jamaica ten years gone and cites him for a man of exquisite dress and manners that would befit a London macaroni, —— save us! And moreover, is as arrant a Jacobite as ever was. Witness the name of his ship."

"I have heard he sails usually in company," remarked my father.

"He works with John Flint, who is no less of a rascal, albeit rougher, according to those unfortunates who have fallen in his path. Flint sails in the *Walrus*, a tall ship out of Plymouth that was on the Smyrna run before she fell into his hands. Betwixt them they are a pretty pair.

"Did you ever hear, gentles, how they sank the Portuguese line-ship off Maderia for naught but the pleasure o' destruction? Aye, so they did. They ha' the metal to hammer a brace of King's ships. But they are wary of such.

"Portuguese, Frenchies, Spaniards or Barbary corsairs they will assail, but they will not stop for a powder-blow with his Majesty's people. Why? I know not, save 'tis never for lack o' daring. Mayhap they know if they ever did my Lords of the Admiralty, that take small account of the sufferings of us poor merchantmen—always saving your Excellency's presence—would be stirred to loose a fleet of stout frigates against 'em."

Captain Farraday stopped perforce for breath, and Governor Clinton seized the opportunity to ask with a smile:

"Captain Rip-Rap did you call your pursuer? What manner of name is this?"

The merchantman shrugged his shoulders.

"Nobody knows, sir. But 'tis the only name he goes by. I ha' heard that years past—oh, it may be twenty or more—he stopped a home-bound Chesapeake packet, and when the master was haled aboard the first question he asked was 'did he have any rip-rap in his cargo?' For it seems he is singularly partial to that mixture of snuff. And now, I ha' been told, his own men give him this name, for even they do not know for certain that to which he was born.

" 'Tis said he was a gentleman who suffered for his political convictions, but that is as like to be a lie as the truth. All I know is that he chased me in past the Hook, though the *Anne* showed him a clean pair o' heels and had run him tops'ls down wi' sunrise this morning. And when I made the harbor, 'twas to find there was not a King's ship to send after him."

"Yes," nodded the Governor; "the *Thetis* frigate sailed for home with dispatches a week ago. But I will send express to Boston where Commodore Burrage lies and bid him get to sea without loss of time. I sympathize with your feelings, Master Farraday, and certes, 'tis beyond toleration that such scoundrels as Rip-Rap and Flint should be permitted to flout his Majesty's Government so openly. Doubt not, our good commodore will make them rue the day."

"But doubt it I must, your Excellency," returned Captain Farraday with sturdy independence. "An express to Boston, say you? Humph! That will require two days or three. Another day to put to sea.

Two days, or it may be three, to beat south. Why, my masters, in a week's time Rip-Rap and Flint will have wrought whatever fiendish purpose they have in view and be off beyond reach."

"Mayhap, mayhap," said the Governor with a touch of impatience. "But 'tis the best I can do."

And with Lieutenant-Governor Colden and the rest he made to move off. Only my father lingered.

"You have letters for me, Captain Farraday?" he asked.

"Aye, indeed, sir—from Master Allen, your agent in London. I was on my way to deliver 'em. And a goodly store of strouds, axes, knives, beads, tools, flints and other trade-goods to your account."

"I will accept the letters at your hands, and even save you the trip to Pearl Street, captain," replied my father. "My son, Robert, here, will visit you aboardship in the morning and take measures to arrange for transshipping your cargo."

"I ha' no quarrel with such terms," rejoined Captain Farraday, fishing a silken-wrapped packet from his coat-tail pocket. "Here you are, Master Ormerod. And I'll be off to the George Tavern for a bite of shore food and a mug of mulled ale."

My father fidgeted the packet in his hands for a moment.

"You are certain 'twas Captain Rip-Rap who chased you?" he asked then.

"I'd swear to his foretops'ls," answered Farraday confidently. "Mark you, my master, when I first sighted him I made sure he was a King's ship, and I lay to until he was abeam. Then I saw he showed no colors—and moreover, there was that about him, which I'll own I can not put a name to, made me suspicious. So I hoisted colors. And still he showed none. I fired a gun, and wi' that he bore up for me, and I made off, wi' every sail set; aye until the sticks groaned. For I knew he was up to no good purpose, and I made certain that he was Rip-Rap.

"As I said afore, he chased me once in '43, and Jenkins he took off Jamaica in the snow *Cynthia* out o' Southampton, when Flint was for drowning the lot; but Rip-Rap, in his cold way, says there was no point to slaying without purpose, and they turned 'em loose in the longboat. And there's none left 'on the Account' that sail in a great ship fit to be a King's frigate, save it be Rip-Rap—Flint's *Walrus* is a tall ship and heavy armed, but hath not the sail-spread o' the *Royal James*. Jenkins says *she* was a Frenchman, and 'tis to be admitted she hath the fine-run lines the Frenchies build."

My father was hard put to it to make head against this flow of talk, but at last he succeeded.

"It was my understanding," he said, "that Captain Rip-Rap disappeared from the West Indies during the late war."

Captain Farraday shrugged his shoulders.

"Like enough. There were too many cruisers o' both sides at large in those seas to suit him. But now he knows we ha' back the piping times of peace—and when nations are at peace your pirates reap their harvest. You may lay to that, Master Ormerod."

"'Tis not to be questioned," assented my father. "I give you thanks, captain. Pray call upon me at your leisure, and if I can be of any service to you I am at your command."

Captain Farraday stumped off toward the George, a tail of the curious at his heels, and I grinned to myself at thought of the strong drink they would offer him in return for his tale. There was no chance of his being sober inside the twenty-four hours.

MY FATHER nodded absently to Peter, who had stood throughout the entire conversation, his flat face sleepily imperturbable.

"I like it not," he muttered, as if to himself.

Peter gave him a quick look but said nothing.

"Is there anything wrong, father?" I asked.

He frowned at me, then stared off at the housetops in a way he had, almost as if he sought to peer beyond the future.

"No—yes—I do not know."

He broke off abruptly.

"Peter, I am glad you are here," he added.

"*Ja*," said Peter vacantly.

"You have not looked at your letters yet," I reminded him.

"I have no occasion to," he retorted. "There is that which— But the street is no place for such conversation. Come home, my boy; come home."

We set off over the snowy ground, and

the people we passed bowed or bobbed their heads to my father, for he was a great man in New York, as great as any after the Governor; but he walked now with his eyes upon the ground, immersed in thought. And once again as we turned into Pearl Street he muttered—

"Nay, I like it not."

Darby McGraw met us at the door, and from his wild gaze I knew him to be half-expecting to behold the pirates hot-foot at our heels.

"Have you performed your tasks, Darby?" questioned my father as the lad backed into the counting-room on the right of the entrance hall.

"Yes, master."

"Be off with you then. I wish not to be disturbed."

"See can you find us late news of the pirates, Darby," I added as he slipped by.

He answered me with a merry scowl, but my father spun on his heel.

"What mean you by that, Robert?" says he.

I was nonplused.

"Why, naught, sir. Darby is daft on pirates. He——"

Peter Corlaer shut the room-door upon the Irish boy and came toward us, moving with the swift stealth that was one of his most astonishing characteristics.

"*Ja*, he does not know," he said.

"What?" challenged my father.

"What you andt I know," returned the Dutchman calmly.

"So you know too, Peter?"

"*Ja*."

I could restrain my impatience no longer.

"What is this mystery?" I demanded. "I thought I knew all the secrets of the business; but sure, father, I never thought to hear that we were concerned as a firm with pirates!"

"We are not," my father answered curtly. "This is a matter of which you know nothing, Robert, because until now there has been no occasion for you to know of it."

He hesitated.

"Peter," he went on, "must we tell the boy?"

"He is not a boy; he is a man," said Peter.

I flashed my gratitude to the fat Dutchman in a smile, but he paid me no attention. My father, too, seemed to forget me. He strode up and down the counting-room, hands under the skirts of his coat, head bowed in thought. Tags of phrases escaped his lips:

"I had thought him dead.

"Strange, if he bobs up again.

"Here is a problem I had never thought to face.

"Mayhap I exaggerate—it can not have significance for us.

"Certes, it must be accident ——"

"If it is he, he comes for a purpose," interrupted Peter.

My father stayed his walk in front of Peter by the fireplace wherein blazed a heap of elm logs.

"Who do you fancy this Captain Rip-Rap to be, Peter? Speak up! You were right when you said Robert is no longer a boy. If there is danger here, he deserves to know of it."

"He is Murray," replied Corlaer, his squeaking voice an incongruous contrast with his immense bulk.

"Andrew Murray!" mused my father. "Aye, 'twould be he. I have suspected it all these years—held it for certainty. But I made sure when he failed to show himself after the last war that Providence had attended to him. It seems I was wrong."

"Whoever he is, this pirate can not do harm to us in New York," I made bold to say.

"Be not too sure, Robert," adjured my father. "He happens to be your great-uncle."

He reached up to the rack over the fireplace and selected a long clay pipe, which he stuffed with tobacco the while I was recovering from my astonishment.

"Your uncle?" I gasped then.

Corlaer hauled forward a couple of chairs, and we all sat in the circle of the firelight, my father on one side of me and Peter on the other. The evening was drawing on apace, and the room was aswarm with shadows a few feet from the hearth. My father stared long into the leaping heart of the flames before he answered me.

"No; your mother's," he said finally.

"But he was the great trader who conducted the contraband trade with Canada!" I cried. "I have heard of him. 'Twas he established the Doom Trail to enable him to supply the French fur-traders with goods to wean the far savages from us! You have told me of him yourself, as hath Master Colden. 'Twas he whom you and Corlaer and the Iroquois fought when you broke down the barriers of the Doom Trail and won back the fur-trade for our people. Why, 'twas then you—you——"

I knew the deep feeling my father still had for my long-dead mother, and I scrupled to stir his memories. He himself took the words from my lips.

"Yes, 'twas then I came to love your mother. She—she was not such as you would expect to find allied by any ties with so great a scoundrel. But she was his niece—past doubt, Robert. She was a Kerr of Fernieside; her mother had been Murray's sister. Kerr and Murray were out together in the '15; Kerr fell at Sheriffmuir. His widow died not long afterward, and Murray took poor waif Marjory.

"He did well by her—there's no denying that. But he always intended to use her to further his own designs. He had a cold eye for the future, with no thought except of his own advantage, and if I— But there's no need to go into that. You know, Robert, how Corlaer and the Seneca chief, Tawannears—he who is now the Guardian of the Western Door of the Long House—and I were able to smash the vast power Murray had built up on the frontier.

"We smashed him so utterly, discrediting him too withal, that he was obliged to flee the province; and even his friends, the French, would have none of him—at least, aboveboard. I have always suspected he still served their interests at large; for he is at bottom a most fanatical Jacobite, and eke sincere in a queer, twisted way. Aye, there is that about him which is difficult to understand, Robert. Himself, he hath no hesitation in believing he serves high purposes of state in all he does."

"But a pirate!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, that is nothing to him!"

"Not'ing," agreed Peter. "He was a pirate on der landt."

"Only a madman could lay claim to serving the State as a pirate," I objected.

"You speak with overconfidence," rebuked my father. "There are men alive today who can remember when Morgan and Davis and Dampier and many another brave fellow of the same kidney lived by piracy and served the King at one and the same times. Some of 'em were hung in the end, and Morgan died a knight. It can be done."

"How?"

"Consider, my boy! Murray—your great-uncle, mind you!—is a Jacobite. For our present Government he hath only hatred and contempt. Any means by which that Government was undermined would seem to him justifiable as aiding to bring about its downfall. Look to the fantastic humor of the man in naming his ship the *Royal James!*"

"If he be indeed the man you think he is," I returned, none too well pleased with the thought of having a pirate for a great-uncle. My father laughed kindly and tapped me on the knee with his free hand.

"I know how you feel, dear lad," he said. "'Twas so identically your mother talked. Bless her heart! We were fresh married when the precious rascal sent us by one of his tarry-breeks that necklace which lies now in my strong-box—the loot of some Indian queen mayhap. Afterward—after she had died—when you were scarce breeched—he sent again; those silver plates upon the sideboard in the dining-room. Dishonestly come by, of course; but what was I to do? I could not cast them in the river, nor did I know how to return them to him. And after that again came a third messenger, this time with no more than a letter in which he condoled with me upon the loss of her whom we had both reverenced above all others!

"Then, I admit, I could have strangled him, for had he been successful in his plans he would have mated her with a Frenchman who was a servant of the Foul Fiend. Yet in his way he cared for her, and he took much interest in all she did. By hook or crook he had word of us, however far he wandered. He knew when you were born. He knew when she died. And now that you have reached manhood he shows his sails outside Sandy Hook. I do not know what it means, Robert, but I like it not! I like it not!"

"But we are not at sea," I protested. "We are in New York. There are soldiers in Fort George. Commodore Burrage will be down from Boston anon. What can a pirate ship, what can two pirate ships, effect against us? Why, the city train-bands——"

"'Tis not force I dread," my father cut me off. "'Tis the infernal cleverness of a warped mind."

"*Ja,*" agreed Peter.

My father thrust the stem of his pipe toward him.

"You feel it, too, old friend?" he cried then.

"If Murray is here he means no goodt," the Dutchman answered ponderously. "No pirate comes nort' in der coldt weather for just fun. *Neen!* Here is too much danger; no places to run andt hide."

"Aye, you have the right of it," assented my father. "And there have been those who claimed New York town was not so innocent of pirates as might appear upon the surface. Murray and his like must sell the goods they steal, and to that end they require connections with traders here and elsewhere. In Governor Burnet's time we used to watch the Whale's Head Tavern and other like hang-outs of the more desperate sort, but I am bound to admit we caught no bigger game than an occasional mutineer or deserter. Yet I know there are merchants in the town none too particular in their dealings, and not every ship that makes port is as peaceful as she seems by any means."

"At the least, sir, we are on the alert," I said.

My father laughed, and Corlaer's riduculous, simpering giggle echoed his grim mirth.

"An intelligent foe discounts so much upon launching his venture," my father answered. "Let us hope we have a modicum of luck to aid us. Whatever plan Murray hath in trend 'twill come to us unexpected and adroit in execution. But tush. There's the dinner-bell. A truce to foreboding!"

CHAPTER II

THE ONE-LEGGED MAN AND THE IRISH MAID

THE next morning I was occupied for several hours in checking over the needs of our trading-stations with Peter Corlaer, so that it was the middle of the forenoon before I was able to leave the counting-room to go aboard of Captain Farraday's ship and concert with her people the lightering of that portion of the cargo which was destined to go to our warehouse.

Darby McGraw eyed me so wistfully when I took my hat that I sent him to the kitchen to secure a bag of fresh-killed chickens and Winter greens, knowing such food would be welcome to sailors after a long voyage, and bade him carry it to the dock. He was as pleased as if he had been presented with his freedom, and skipped along whistling like a skylark.

We walked down Pearl Street to Broad Street, where the landing-basin indents the land; and I was passing on with intent to secure a wherry from the foot of Whitehall Street to row me out to the Bristol packet when Darby drew my attention to the soaring masts and tangled cordage of a great ship lying at anchor in the East River anchorage.

"'Tis a frigate, Master Robert!" he exclaimed.

There was no mistaking the rows of painted gun-ports and the solid bulwarks; and for a moment I fancied Commodore Burrage had anticipated our needs. Then the flag at her mizzen truck rippled out, and I beheld the red-and-gold banner of Spain.

"D'ye suppose he hath come after the pirate?" whispered Darby, all agog.

"Not he," I answered, laughing. "'Tis a Spaniard, and he and his kidney are not hungry for pirate gore, Darby."

"Whisht, but if he would only make to shoot off a cannon or two!" sighed Darby. "Or maybe hang a poor soul at the yard-arm the while we watched. Oh, Master Robert, wouldn't it be grand?"

"Go to," said I, laughing again at the quaint fancies of the lad. "You are as bloodthirsty as any pirate that sails the Spanish Main."

"I'll warrant you I am," returned Darby sturdily. "I'd be a grand pirate, I would—and I'd make naught of frigates, be they Spaniard or King's ship; aye, or Frenchies. I'd take 'em all!"

"Certes, you would," I agreed. "But look, Darby! There's another strange vessel—beyond the frigate."

I pointed to a battered little brig with patched and dirty sails and a spatter of white showing in her black-painted hull where a roundshot had sent the splinters flying.

"And he hath seen the pirates, or I am amiss," I added. "His escape must have been exceeding narrow."

Darby's eyes waxed as large as a cat's in the dark.

"Whurra, whurra, do but look to the shot-hole in the side of him! 'Tis he will have made a noble prayer. And now will ye mock me for saying there are pirates abroad, Master Robert?"

"Not I, Darby. Yon fellow has been closer to death than I like to think of, I answered."

"Now there was as true a word as ever was heard spoke," proclaimed a pleasant voice behind me. "And shows most unaccountable understanding and humanitee, so it do, seeing as there's precious few landsmen as stop to figger out the chances a poor sailor must take and never a thankee from his owners nor aught but curses from his skipper, like as not. True as true, young gentleman. I makes you my duty, and says as how, seeing I was one of them vouchsafed a miraculous salvation, I hopes you'll permit me to offer my most humble thanks."

I swung around to scrutinize the owner of the voice and saw a handsome, open-faced man in the prime of life, big and strong of his body, but with only one leg. The other, the left, had been lopped off high up near the hip, and he supported himself upon a long crutch of very fine-carved hardwood—mahogany, I afterward discovered. This crutch he employed with all the dexterity of his missing limb. A thong from a hole under the armpiece was looped around his neck, so that when he chose to sit down his support could never fall out of his reach; and in its butt was set a sharp spur of steel to give it a grip upon rough ground or slippery decks.

While I looked at him and he was first speaking he hopped up beside me with a confidential air that was very flattering to a young man and impressed Darby even more than it did me.

"Are you from the brig yonder?" I asked curiously.

"Aye, aye, young gentleman, I am; and one of the miserable sinners as was saved by an inscrootable Providence as takes no account o' men's deserts, just or unjust, as the preachers' sayin' is. Out of Barbaders, I am, in the brig *Constant*. Name o' Silver, sir—John, says my sponsors in baptism.

"But my mates most generally calls me 'Barbecue' 'count o' my being held a monstrous fine cook. And there's a tale to that, young sir. Ah, yes! This weren't the first time I suffered at the hands o' them pirates that scourge and ravage the seas to the despite of poor, honest sailormen."

He lowered his voice.

"D'ye see this lopsided carcass of mine now? You do, says you. Yes, yes; there ain't no mistakin' a one-legged man. And how do you suppose I lost my left stick, eh? Can't say, says you—nor it ain't strange, seein' as we've never met afore this.

"Well, I'll tell ye, sir. You ha' a young face, and kind, and I can see you take an interest in an unfortunate sailorman's sorrows—aye, and this good lad wi' ye, too—from Ireland, ain't ye, my hearty? I knowed it, I knowed it!

"But what was I a-sayin'? Oh, yes, to be sure. I was tellin' ye of my lost leg—and glad I am it wasn't my flipper as went. 'Cause why, says you? 'Cause a man can set himself to makin' good a lost leg, which ain't no use for nothin' except walking.

"But a hand now? Figger it out, my master! No hand, and ye can't work, ye can't fight, ye can't scarcely eat. That's why I says I'm lucky."

The man attracted me by his originality, and I own frankly I would have pressed him for further information whether Darby had been with me or not; but 'twas Darby brought him back to the main point of interest.

"Did ye see the pirates?" panted the lad in excitement.

John Silver drew himself erect upon his crutch and frowned out at the shot-scarred brig.

"See 'em?" he repeated. "Well now, my lad, that depends. Aye, aye, it all depends.

"This last time, d'ye mean? No, I can't conscientiously say I seen 'em this time. In the matter o' my leg 'twas different—and the time Flint marooned me."

"You know Flint then?" I broke in upon him.

He shook his head.

"Know him? Oh, no, young gentleman; I don't know no bloody villains like that. I ha' seen 'em, yes—a sight too many of 'em, as ye might say. And suffered most terrible at their hands; but I make no doubt the Lord is decided I ha' suffered my portion, seein' that this last time He delivered me safe and sound out o' the scoundrels' hands."

"Was it off Sandy Hook they attacked you?" I inquired.

"Off Sandy Hook?" he repeated. "Maybe 'twas so, young gentleman. We took small reckoning o' where we were. Our one thought was to make port whole and safe."

"But I see they hulled you?" I pressed him.

"That?" he answered. "Oh, yes; but— May I make bold to ask, sir, ha' other vessels been chased off New York port, do you know?"

I pointed to where Captain Farraday's craft swung at her anchor a scant quarter-mile above the brig.

"That Bristol packet ran the notorious Captain Rip-Rap tops'ls down but yester-morning," I told him.

His brows knit together in a frown, apparently of thought.

"Captain Rip-Rap you says it was! Blister me, young gentleman, but that's dreadful news. Well, well, well! A fortunate escape as ever was. And 'tis good hearing that others was ekal lucky. But I dare say the King's ships will be after him by now?"

"No, there's none nearer than Boston," I answered. " 'Twill be a week at the least before we can hunt the scoundrels hence."

He wagged his head dolefully.

"Blister me, but that's ill news. Fortunate indeed I was to draw clear. He was after me till darkness and sheered off more in fear o' the sands than for aught else, I dare swear."

"So it was yesterday he chased you?" I asked.

"To be sure, young sir. Wasn't that what I told ye? Yesterday, about the noon glass, he came a-thunderin' up, and towards dusk he could bring his bow-chasers to bear, and was for droppin' a spar to hinder us. But we took his shot in the hull, as ye see, and got off safe in spite of all he could do."

One of the wherrymen was sculling toward us along the shore, and I waved to him to pull under the piling on which we stood.

"I must be off," I said. "I congratulate you, Master Silver, on your escape. Whatever dangers you may have encountered in the past, your good luck was with you yesterday."

He bobbed his head and pulled at his forelock.

"Thank'ee kindly, young gentleman. Here, sir, let me catch the painter. Right! Will ye ha' the basket on the thwart by ye? And this nice lad here, doesn't he go, too? No?

"Maybe then ye'd add a mite to your kindness and let me borry his time for a half-glass or so for to show me a couple o' landmarks I must make in the town. I wouldn't ask it of ye, sir, only as ye see, I'm half-crippled in a manner o' speakin', and this is a strange port to me, as plies usual to the West Injies."

"Use the lad by all means," I answered. "Darby, take Master Silver wherever he wishes to go."

Darby's freckled face gleamed at the prospect of more of the company of this one-legged sailorman, who talked so easily of pirate fights and flights.

"Oh, aye, Master Robert," says he. "I'll help him all I know."

"O' course he will," spoke up Silver. "I never seed a boy wi' a kinder face. A kind face means a kind heart, I always says, young gentleman."

My wherryman was on the point of laying to his oars when a sudden thought caused me to check him.

"By the way, Master Silver," I called, "it occurs to me that perhaps Darby may be unable to serve you in all that you wish. Do you seek any one in especial?"

He hesitated for just the fraction of a minute.

"Why, not especially in particklar, sir," he answered at last. "I am for the Whale's Head Tavern, if ye happen to know o' such a place."

I nodded.

" 'Tis in the East Ward close by. Darby can show you."

He shouted renewed thanks and stumped off agilely on his crutch, Darby strutting beside him with a comical pride.

ABOARD the *Anne* I found all in confusion. Captain Farraday, as I had expected, had not returned since he landed the preceding afternoon and undoubtedly was sleeping off an accumulation of divers liquors in the George Tavern. The mate had gone ashore that morning to search for him, and would probably take advantage of the opportunity to emulate his skipper's example. Master Jenkins, who had missed drowning at the red hands of the redoubtable Rip-Rap and Flint, was in charge of the ship. He was a melancholy, sour-visaged East-countryman, who moved with a deliberation as pronounced as Peter Corlaer's, and inspecting the manifests with him was a long-drawn out business. I accepted an invitation to share his midday meal, and the afternoon was gone when we concluded our work, agreed upon the time of arrival of the lighters on the morrow and returned to the deck.

My wherry had been dismissed long ago, and he bade the bosun muster a crew to row me ashore. Standing by the gangway, I commented idly upon the two ships which had come in since morning.

"The brig had a close go of it with your friend Rip-Rap," I remarked.

"Aye," returned Jenkins glumly. "'Tis passing queer a Barbadan should be fetching sugar and rum to New York. They leave that mostly to the Yankees."

"True," I admitted; "yet there's an exception to every rule."

A silvery whistle-blast sounded on the deck of the Spanish frigate up-stream.

"Too bad that's not one of ours now," I commented. "Rip-Rap should have a dose of his own medicine."

Master Jenkins expressed utter disapprobation without a wrinkle on his features.

"They Spaniards!" he snorted. "What are they a-doin' here anyway, I'd like to know?"

"He may have been blown north on his crossing," I hazarded.

Master Jenkins snorted a second time.

"He hasn't started a rope. Mischief they're up to. Never knowed it to fail."

"What kind of mischief?" I inquired.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Not knowin', can't say. But no good ever came from they Spaniards, Master Ormerod, and ye may lay to that."

Before I could answer him the bosun reported the small boat all clear and lying at ladder-foot, and I bade Master Jenkins a hasty good evening, for his stolid pessimism became mighty irksome upon close acquaintance.

As my boat straightened away from the Bristol packet's side a barge shot around the hull of the Spaniard and pulled after us, a dozen brawny fellows tugging at the oars. A single cloaked figure sat in the stern sheets beside the officer in command. The two boats made the Broad Street slip almost together, and I leaped ashore, tossed several coins to the sailors who had rowed me and started to walk off, bent upon reporting to my father, who, I knew, would be provoked by the length of time my errand had consumed. But I had not walked far when a man called after me from the wharf-head.

"*Señor!* Sirr-rr-rah!"

I turned to face the coxswain of the frigate's barge and a farrago of Spanish gibberish of which I understood not a word. And upon my saying as much, a second person stepped forward into the yellow glow of an oil lanthorn which hung from a bracket upon a warehouse wall hard by. 'Twas the cloaked figure of the barge, and instead of a midshipman or under-officer the scanty light revealed a young woman whose lissome grace was vibrant through the cumbersome folds of her wrap. A single ejaculation of sibilant Spanish, and the coxswain was hushed.

"Sir," said she then in English as good as my own, "can you direct me to the Whale's Head Tavern?"

I could bring forth no better than a stammer in answer. She was the second stranger that day to ask for the Whale's Head, which my father had remarked the previous evening for a noted resort of bad characters; and certes, she appeared to be the last sort of woman who might be expected to have anything to do with the kind of roistering wickedness which went on there. Also, I could not forbear asking myself how came so fair a maid aboard a Spanish frigate.

In the soft lanthorn-light she was anything but Spanish in her looks. Dark, yes, with hair that shone a misty-black, but her eyes were as blue as Darby McGraw's, and her nose had the least suspicion of a tilt to it. Her mouth was wide, with a kind of twist at the ends that quirked up oddly when she laughed and drooped with a sorrow fit to crack open your heart if she wept. And she was little more than a child in years, with a manifest innocence which went oddly with the question she had asked me.

A slim foot tapped impatiently upon the cobbles as I stared.

"Well, sir," she said coldly, "does it happen you do not know English better than Spanish?"

"N-no," I managed to get out. "But—but the truth is, the Whale's Head is no place for such as you, mistress."

Her eyes narrowed.

"I do not catch your meaning perhaps," she answered. "It is my father I go to meet there."

"But he would never favor your coming there at this hour," I protested.

She permitted herself a trill of laughter.

"You speak as if you had full knowledge of his ways," she admitted. "But the nuns at St. Bridget's were telling me oft and oft how I was going out into the wicked world, and sorra a look at wickedness have I had yet. So I decided this evening I should have some savor of adventure to make up for being cooped all these weeks in that horrid, dirty old ship; and I made Don Pablo, who was officer of the deck, call away a boat for me—and he wringing his hands and pleading would I bring about his ruin."

I laughed myself at the wonderful spontaneity of her mood. Faith, I could imagine how the young dons aboard the frigate philandered themselves sick over her.

"But that has naught to do with your going to the Whale's Head tonight," I reminded her. "Indeed you should never think of it."

"I will be the judge of that," she retorted, instantly haughty. "And if my father is there I can come to no harm."

"If he is," I said. "I doubt you have mistaken his ordinary."

"No, no," she said decidedly. "I heard him speaking with them of it. But it may be you are right, sir, and I will not be so ungrateful as to flout a kindly stranger's well-meant advice. Juan can go into the tavern when we come to it, and I will bide outside. But somewhere I must walk, for my feet are all dancey with the sway of the sea, and we shall be away again with the tide in the morning. This is the last dry land I shall tread in many a week."

"If you will allow me, I'll put you on your way for the Whale's Head," I offered. "I must walk in that direction."

"Sure, sir, it is a great favor you offer," she answered. "I can not but thank you."

And she gave an order in Spanish which fetched the under-officer she called Juan and one of his men out from the shadows. They fell in behind us as we walked off along the line of the warehouses.

"You are upon a long voyage?" I ventured.

"You may well say so," she cried. "From here to the Floridas, and after that on to the Havana and the cities of the Main."

"You will soon have no need to regret a lack of adventures," I said. "There are few men, let alone maids, who fare so far afield."

"Ah, sir, that is what I like to think upon! I was near mad with delight when my father came to the convent and took me from the sisters. Until the ship's decks were under my feet I could not believe it was true that I was really free."

"But you are never Spanish!" I said. "I ask not in idle curiosity, though ——"

Her laughter was like a chime of bells.

"Sure, they say I am as Irish as the pigs in the Wicklow hills where I was born."

And all of a sudden she was grave again.

"I am not knowing your politics, sir, but there's maybe no harm in just telling you my father was of those who opposed the Hanoverian and fought for King James and Bonnie Charlie. And because his own King can not employ him, he serves Spain."

"It is not pleasant for an Englishman to think of all the brave gentlemen must serve foreign monarchs," I acknowledged. "But I hope you will be happy in the Indies, mistress."

"Oh, we shall not be staying there long," she answered blithely. "My father is an engineer officer, and he must inspect the fortifications on the Main and elsewhere. We shall be returning to Spain within the year. But look, sir! Is not that sign intended to be a whale's head?"

"Yes," I said. "This is the tavern."

One look at its flaring windows and the cut-throat gentry who swaggered in and out of the low door convinced my companion that I had not misrepresented the character of the place. She drew back to the curb, and the corners of her mouth dropped sadly.

"Glory, what an ill hole!" she murmured. "Now for why would the *padre* come hither? Business, says he; but ——"

And she shook her head with a vague doubting emphasis.

"I would not seem to be thrusting myself upon you, mistress," I said, "yet I am fearful your Spaniards can not make themselves understood. Will it please you that I inquire within for your father?"

She considered, catching a corner of her lip betwixt white teeth.

"Troth, sir," she answered finally, "I see not how I can avoid going the deeper in debt to you."

There was a moment's pause.

"And how shall I——"

"Ay de mi!" she exclaimed with a bubble of laughter. "How stupid of me to be forgetting I am just a maid off the sea to you. Ask for Colonel O'Donnell, sir, and tell him his daughter waits without."

And as I started toward the door she added gayly:

"It is not every girl could step upon a strange shore and find a cavalier waiting to aid her. But what would Mother Seraphina say to such brazenness? Ah, I can see her now! 'The blessed saints preserve us, Moira! Have ye no manners or modesty into yourself at all? A hundred Aves and the Stations of the Cross twice before you sup.' "

Her voice was still ringing in my ears as I shouldered a drunken sailor from my path, lowered my head to pass under the lintel of the tavern's entrance and so gained the hazy blue atmosphere of the taproom, cluttered with tables, foul with the smoke and stale alelees, abuzz with rough voices bawling oaths and sea-songs.

It was the chorus of one of these songs which first distracted my thoughts from the Irish girl outside—a wild, roaring lilt of blood and ribaldry:

"Fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for the rest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"

I looked to the corner whence it came, and discovered the one-legged sailor, John Silver, thumping the time with a pewter mug on the table-tcp as he led the group around him, foremost amongst whom, after himself, was Darby McGraw, flaming red mop standing out like a buccaneer ensign, shrill voice carrying above the thundering basses of his companions—as villainous a crew, to outward seeming, as I had ever looked upon. I noted especially a pasty, tallowy-faced man with a skrim of greasy black hair and a shifty eye, and a big, lusty fellow with a tarry pigtail and a mahogany-brown face, who evidently found as much satisfaction in the song as poor, fuddled Darby.

Silver saw me almost as soon as I spotted him, and with a quick word to the others, got to his feet and stumped across the room, dragging Darby after him by the arm. His large, good-humored features were wreathed in a smile tinged with mortification.

"So you come after him, Master Ormerod, did you?" he shouted to make himself heard in the confusion. "And ashamed o' myself I oughter be, says you, and with reason, too. But I'm not one to lead a likely lad astray, and all Darby's had was good, ripe ale and two earsful o' sea-gossip as'll give him things to dream o' for nights to come. I shouldn't oughter o' let him come back, sir, but when he stuck that red top o' his in the door an hour past I hadn't the heart to send him away. He's come to no harm, so you won't hold it against him for a extry mug or two of ale; will you, sir?"

"I did not come after him," I answered; "but as I am here he had best return home with me. Where did you get my name, Silver?"

He pulled his forelock knowingly.

"Why, from Darby, o' course, sir—not that anybody on the water-front couldn't ha' told me, seein' what a kind-hearted, friendly young gentleman you are. But asking your pardon for the liberty, sir, can I serve you in any way?"

"I don't think so," I told him. "I am seeking a Colonel O'Donnell."

I fancied a flicker of surprize stirred the bluff friendliness mirrored in his face. He stared around the room.

"Never heard o' the gentleman, sir, which ain't surprizin', seein' I was never here before this morning, myself; but I ran into some old shipmates of mine as gave me the run o' the place, and it may be I can find out for you from one o' them. Just you wait here a shake, Master Ormerod, and I'll see what I can do."

This seemed the wisest course, inasmuch as it was apparent there was nobody in the taproom of the quality of Colonel O'Donnell, so I nodded assent; and as Silver stumped away, threading a nimble passage in and out of the crowded tables, I asked Darby what he had been doing. Somewhat to my astonishment, the boy lapsed into sullenness and answered in monosyllables. Only once he revealed a flare of interest, when I remarked—

"That was a sufficiently devilish song you were singing, Darby."

"That it was!" he exclaimed. "Whisht, whiles singing it ye can *feel* the blood a-dripping from your cutlass."

"And who were the others singing with you?"

The dour look covered his face like a curtain.

"Oh, just shipmates."

"Of yours?"

"No, of Master Silver's."

"What are their names?"

"I know not."

"Oh, come now, Darby!"

"Well, the one he calls Bill Bones and the other Black Dog—but there's no meaning in nature in that last."

SILVER had disappeared through a door at the rear in company with one of the drawers, and now he came swinging in again on his crutch, ahead of a tall, lantern-jawed man in a rich dress of black-and-silver, whose gold-hilted sword proclaimed the gentleman. This man Silver ushered to me with a crudely hearty courtesy.

"Here's luck, Master Ormerod," he called when he was within earshot. "My friend had heard tell the colonel was abovestairs. This here's the young gentleman I spoke of, your honor. My duty to ye both, sirs, and always pleased to serve."

And off he swung on his crutch again to be received with acclamations by his cronies in the corner.

The lantern-jawed man gave me a keen glance, almost a suspicious glance, I should have said. He had a nervous manner, and there was a kind of restless glow in his eyes.

"Well, sir?" he said. "I understand you desired speech with me?"

"If you are Colonel O'Donnell——"

He nodded curtly.

"—I am to tell you that your daughter awaits you outside," I concluded.

He was genuinely startled.

"My daughter? But who are you, sir, who act as her guardian?"

I was nettled, and did not hesitate to show it.

"She asked me the way hither when she came ashore," I retorted, "and, deeming it scarce probable that you would care to have her enter the taproom, I even offered my services to fetch you forth to her."

I saw now his resemblance to her, for the corners of his mouth twitched down in the same way hers had. And he muttered something like a curse in Spanish.

"It seems I am beholden to you, sir," he answered stiffly. "She is a child, and vastly ignorant of the world, and I must be both father and mother to her."

I bowed and stood aside to make room for him to pass out.

"Master Ormerod, the seaman called you, did he not?" continued O'Donnell. "Perhaps, sir, you will permit an older man to compliment you upon an honorable deportment."

A slightly pompous tone invaded his speech.

"I am not unfamiliar with the chief centers of our Old World society, Master Ormerod, and I have the honor to hold the office of chamberlain to a monarch, who, though he may not be named upon English soil, will some day recover the estate a usurper has deprived him of. I need say no mcre, I am sure."

"I understand, sir," I replied. "And may I suggest that Mistress O'Donnell is awaiting you?"

He brushed by me with a click of impatience, and Darby and I followed him to the street, Darby thrilled anew by the sight of his luxurious habit, the five-pound ruffles that covered his wrists and the worked hilt of his sword. As we all three emerged, Mistress O'Donnell darted up to her father and caught at the lapels of his coat.

"Ah, *padre*," she cried in a brogue that clotted and slurred her words, "you'll not be holding it against me because I wearied of the ship and would feel the earth crumbling underfoot, and me so lonely for lack of you I was near to weeping the while I sat in my cabin with naught to do but read my Hours!"

He wilted, as must any man have done, flinging his arm around her with a gesture that verged on the theatrical.

"Tush, tush, Moira," he rebuked her gently; " 'twas unbecoming in you, and in Spanish lands such conduct would lead to trouble. See that you do it not a second time. I will give you in charge of Juan; and, having had your taste of freedom, you must return aboard, for I have matters yet requiring my attention. Ah, yes, and you must thank this gentleman properly for his gallantry. Master Ormerod, my dear! His father is a great merchant of this town."

Mistress O'Donnell swept me a willowy curtsey, and as I bowed acknowledgment I wondered where he had secured such exact information about me. He had seemed totally ignorant of who I was when we met.

"Sure, I'll not be after trying to thank you," says my lady to me with a twinkle in her eye. "For I couldn't find the words would express my gratitude. But for you, 'tis an awful fool I'd have made of myself this quarter-hour past."

Colonel O'Donnell hemmed reprovingly.

"Let it be a lesson to you, my girl. My thanks to you again, Master Ormerod. My compliments to your father, if it please you. Good night, sir."

I understood that he wished to be rid of me, and accepted the cue.

"Good night, sir," I replied. "And a fair voyage to you, mistress. If I can be of further service, pray command me."

"No, Master Ormerod, here our paths diverge," she answered softly, and placed her hand upon her father's arm.

A moment later I was hurrying north and west, Darby McGraw chattering beside me, for the lady's bright beauty seemed to have scoured the sulkiness from his spirits.

"Ah, there was the lovely, gracious maid for ye, Master Robert!" he cried. "Did ye hark to the song in her voice? And did ye see the blue in her eyes, like lake-water with green fields all around and the sun shining faint? She's the breath of the Ould Sod; and oh, whirra, it's never more I'll see it, for they say I'm to be a pirate."

"You talk nonsense," I returned harshly.

"Nonsense?" he repeated. "It's a grand word, nonsense, Master Robert. But whisht, now, ye'll say a good word for me with the old master, won't ye?"

I told him I would, mostly to stop the clacking of his tongue; and he skipped high like a colt that has just had its first meal of oats.

"She put the comether on ye, that elegant young maid," he continued. "She had a way with her, she did. Aye, for her I'd give over being a pirate."

"We'll never see her again, Darby," I said. "She'll be beyond the Caribbees a few weeks hence, and we plodding at our tasks here in New York."

He gave me a shrewd glance.

"Indeed, and it's a wiser man than the Pope can see beyond the weeks, Master Robert," says he.

CHAPTER III

A CALLER IN THE NIGHT

WE SAT late at dinner that night, for my father must needs have me repeat at length the tale of my experiences during the day, revealing a perturbation unusual in him, although Peter Corlaer ate on with placid solemnity, scarce a flicker of interest in his little eyes that were almost buried behind their ramparts of flesh.

"I have heard of this Colonel O'Donnell," said my father when I had made an end. "He was in Scotland with Prince Charles—one of the Irish crew who bogged a promising venture, if what men say be true. I marvel at his temerity in landing here, for there must be a price upon his head in England. Doubtless he was consorting with some of our Jacobite sympathizers at the Whale's Head—a fitting place for such an intrigue!

"The captain of the frigate called upon the Governor this morning, so Master Colden told me, with a cock-and-bull story of a mistake in his reckoning that took him north of his course. I smell the taint of a Jacobite plot! Your gloomy friend Jenkins had the right of it. Never trust a Spaniard when he comes with pretense of friendship."

"Mistress O'Donnell said they were for the Floridas," I protested. "Sure they are not far out of their course."

My father smiled for the first time.

"The little maid would have no knowledge of her father's purpose. And if she did— No, no, lad, I had my share of plotting in my youth. Our Jacobites are a pernicious lot."

"Yet you yourself were one of them," I pointed out, a thought maliciously.

His face darkened.

"True, and I learned by experience. Set that to my credit, Bob. Britain is greater than any king or any family. 'Tis the country, not the man, must be considered. And Britain fares better under Hanoverian George than she ever did under a Stuart Charles or James."

I was still unconvinced.

"But certes, sir, 'tis in no sense strange for the Spaniards to dispatch an engineer to inspect their fortifications this side the Atlantic."

"An Irish engineer officer?"

My father smiled again.

" 'Tis to be wondered at. But there! In such a devious business we might not hope to reach the truth, nor am I greatly concerned thereat. Most Jacobite plots are ill-planned sallies by desperate, misguided men. No, boy, what irks me most is the tidings you had of the one-legged sailor. Silver, you called him? Yes, I like it not to hear the pirates are outside our harbor. It hath the look of daring beyond the ordinary. If Murray——"

THE door behind me opened, and I saw my father's jaw drop. Peter, at my right hand, let his eyelids blink, then went on quietly cracking nuts between his huge fingers.

"Did I hear you call me, Ormerod?"

The voice from the doorway had a chill, level quality that was as resonant as the tolling of a bell.

" 'If Murray'— I *thought* I heard my name?"

I screwed around in my chair. There in the doorway stood the most remarkable figure I had ever seen. A large man, straight as an arrow despite the years that had planted crow's feet so thickly about his eyes, his square shoulders showed to advantage the exquisite tailoring of the black velvet coat he wore. His smallclothes were of a fine yellow damasked silk, and his stockings of silk to match. Diamonds flashed from the buckles of his shoes, his fob, his fingers and the hilt of his dress-sword. A great ruby glowed in the Mechelin jabot that cascaded from his throat. Over his arm hung a cloak, and under his elbow was tucked a hat cocked in the latest mode.

His whole figure was remarkable, as I have said. It must have obtained attention anywhere.

But it was the memory of his face that abided with you. The features were all big and strongly carved; the nose was a jutting beak above a tight-lipped mouth and a jaw that was brutally square; the eyes were a vivid black, flecked with tawny lights. His hair was of a pure, silvery whiteness and drawn back, clubbed and tied with a black ribbon. His cheeks and brows were furrowed by a maze of wrinkles, yet the flesh seemed as firm as mine. In every way he suggested breeding, gentility, wealth; but there was a combined effect of sinister power and predatory will, a hint of ruthless egotism which took no account of any interests save his own.

He acknowledged my prolonged stare with a slight bow, mildly derisive.

"Your son, Ormerod?" he continued. "My grandnephew? Robert, I think, you named him, for the redoubtable Master Juggins of London, who aided you to start life anew after you had contrived to wreck yourself upon the rocks of a foresworn Jacobite career."

My father rose slowly to his feet.

"Yes, he is my son, Murray. It is neither his fault nor mine that he is also your grandnephew. As to his name, Robert Juggins was a better man than you or I, and you can not inspire my son against me by hinting at hidden chapters of my early life. He knows that I was deluded into serving the Stuarts, and lived to learn that country comes before king. We were talking of that before you entered."

The man in the doorway nodded his head.

"I seem to remember that became a topic of some interest to you—after the Jacobites hounded you from France and the Hanoverians drove you from England. Ah, well, I can commend a philosophical adaptability in face of adversity. 'Tis a trait I have had occasion to practise, myself."

He let the door swing to and stepped behind me to the left side of the table, where there was a vacant chair.

"I would not seem discourteous," he remarked suavely. "I note another old friend, Ormerod—or perhaps I should say an old enemy. Permit me to observe, Corlaer, that you wear well with the years—as well as myself, indeed."

Peter squeezed a hickory-nut between his forefinger and thumb and looked up vacantly into Murray's face.

"*Ja*," he said.

"Lest you should be tempted by some misapprehension," pursued Murray, "I may inform you that I have every reason to suppose myself safe from any measures you might take against me. I know well the dangerous swiftness of wit Peter conceals beneath that flat face of his, and I should not like to see him hurt——"

"*Ja*, you bet," giggled the Dutchman.

"I assure you such is the fact," answered Murray. "I hope to do what I have come here for tonight without injuring anybody, and if you gentlemen will listen to me quietly for a few moments I am confident that the issue will be harmless for all of us."

He cast his cloak and hat upon a chair by the fire and put his hand upon the vacant one betwixt my father and me.

"May I?" he asked.

My father, still standing, said nothing; and Murray, with a shrug, accepted the silence for consent, sank gracefully into the seat and drew a golden snuffbox, studded with brilliants, from a pocket.

"With your permission," he said, springing the cover.

A fragrant whiff of snuff-tobacco tickled my senses as he offered it generally.

" 'Tis excellent stuff," he remarked. "Ripe Rip-Rap. What? None of you? Ah, then——"

He dusted a pinch under his nostrils, inhaled and daintily used his handkerchief, a lace-edged morsel such as women carry.

My father leaned forward across the table, a blaze of hatred in his face.

" 'Tis true, then!"

Murray regarded him in some surprize.

"True? My dear sir, I assured you 'twas Rip-Rap."

My father turned to Peter and me.

"After I told you—about this man, Robert—I hoped that I was wrong—that I had done him an injustice. But now he has convicted himself out of his own lips."

Murray gently deposited the snuffbox upon the table in front of him.

"Ah," he murmured. "I see! You were referring to my nickname, or, shall we say, *nom de guerre?*"

My father laughed bitterly.

"*Nom de guerre!* Name of a pirate! But let us have it, fair and openly, Andrew Murray. Are you Captain Rip-Rap?"

"I suppose most people would agree with your description," replied Murray; "although personally I prefer the word buccaneer. It is susceptible to so much wider use, and there is about it a suggestion of— However, we are not interested here tonight in the more abstruse branches of etymology. I am the person popularly known on the high seas as Captain Rip-Rap, and I fancy I might have logical grounds for arguing that if any disgrace adheres to me by that admission, 'twas you, Ormerod, who drove me to the practise of what you call piracy."

" 'Tis like you to take that tone," said my father. "I drove you from the practise of what amounted to piracy on the land. There is no difference in the way you earn your livelihood today, Murray. You were an outlaw, and you are an outlaw."

"I fear you are incapable of doing me justice," sighed Murray. "You should know that I have always labored to serve higher ends than the mere sordid pursuit of money, such as has possessed you and those like you."

He wagged his head sadly.

"I had hoped better of you, Ormerod. You are of good blood, man. 'Sdeath, do you never think on what you lose by playing the small colonial merchant here?"

"I think better of the estate I won unaided with my bare hands and wits, than of the manor I lost in England through youthful folly," rejoined my father. "But I never thought to hear a pirate prate of the blessings of birth. Phaugh!"

Murray's face purpled, and a Scots burr crept into his speech.

"No man challenges my birth," he shouted. "I am of better blood than you. I trace my lineage to James V. I quarter my arms with the Douglases, the Homes, the Morays, the Keiths, the Hepburns, aye, and with the oldest clans beyond the Highland Line!"

"I have heard so before," commented my father drily.

Murray breathed deeply, obviously fighting for self-control.

"Let it pass!" he exclaimed with a magnificent gesture. "What doth it signify? I am what I am, sir—and the day comes when I shall stand as high as the highest."

He drew himself up very erect in his chair, but my father answered with the same dry scorn:

"That too I have heard before. Once, I mind, you expected to be a duke by exploiting ill-gotten gains with Jacobite intrigue. Aye, you would have ruined your country, sold her to the French like enough, all for a peerage. Now, I suppose, you would do it again."

"What would you?"

Murray flicked a pinch of snuff into his nostrils.

"The luck was against me, although you yourself, and silent Peter there, know how close to success I came."

"*Ja*," squeaked Peter, still busy crushing nuts and slowly crunching their meats.

"I have had the ——'s own luck," Murray went on, heedless of the Dutchman. "In the '45 I was half the world away, for there were too many cruisers abroad in the Caribbees for my comfort. Before I could get back the Prince had played and lost. A shame! With me——"

"With you he would have been sold to Government for the thirty thousand pounds reward that Cumberland offered," said my father.

Murray looked hurt.

"I have been accused of much," he replied; "but never of disloyalty to King James or his sons."

"True," assented my father; "you could never earn anything by it. Your opportunities all came from the other direction."

"Your words are unjust, sir," said Murray with a hauteur he had not shown previously. "Indeed, if matters fall out as I anticipate, I shall soon give proof which can not be ignored of my devotion to the Good Cause. I am preparing a combination which——"

He swung around suddenly upon me.

"But I am forgetting my main purpose!" he cried. "Stand up, grandnephew, and let me have a look at you."

I would not have heeded him, but my father said quickly:

"Do as he asks you, Robert. I'd not have him think you are crooked in the legs."

So I stood.

"A likely build," he remarked warmly. "You favor your father, I see—save in the face, it may be. There you are your mother, my maid Marjory. Ah, sweet chit, would she were with us now! A sad loss; a sad loss, lad!"

THE expression which came to my father's face was terrible in its intensity of passion. He leaned closer to Murray, white to the cheekbones, his nostrils pinched in.

"Murray," he said, "make an end of such talk! As you value your life, mention her not again. I know not what cards you hold up your sleeve here, but if we all die in the next moment I will slay you as you sit if you profane her memory with your foul tongue."

Murray stared up at him coolly and took a pinch of snuff.

"Ah, well, you were always prejudiced," he answered. "I— But it serves no purpose to reopen old wounds. I am of one mind with you there. Yet tell me this: Have you poisoned the boy's mind against me?"

My father dropped back into his seat with a sour grimace.

"Poisoned his mind?" he repeated. "I told him no more recently than yesterday who and what you were. You brought that upon yourself by pursuing your rascally trade in these seas. Until then the boy did not so much as know that you existed—as his relative."

My great-uncle—I was gradually beginning to think of him as such—pondered this news, head on one side, peering from my father to me and back again.

"I see, I see," he murmured. "Humph! I fear his mind hath been corrupted. But I am not surprized. No, no! I prepared for this."

"For what?" demanded my father.

Murray leaned abruptly across the table.

"I will be frank with you, Ormerod—and with Nephew Robert here. I am somewhat in difficulties——"

"If 'tis money—" began my father.

My great-uncle's gesture was sufficient check to this.

"I am not in difficulties for money, although I am like to be in difficulties shortly in connection with an embarrassing quantity of it. In fine, sir, I am upon the point of launching the coup of my career, one which will entail consequences of a stupendous character, and in the end, I venture to predict, echo in throne-rooms and chancelleries. Aye, kingdoms shall——"

He broke off.

"It is not necessary that I should go into that. Suffice it for the present if I say that I am in the position of a man who has partially tamed an unwieldy band of wild animals. My own ship I can rely upon up to a certain point, but I have associated with me——"

"That would be Flint?" interjected my father.

"I am flattered by the knowledge of my affairs which you display," replied my great-uncle with one of his courtly inclinations. "Yes; I had occasion, when I first went to sea, for a competent navigator. Flint served me in that capacity until I became independent, and I then fitted him out with his own ship. We have cruised in company since. I am not betraying a professional secret when I add that he is a man whose undoubted force of personality is offset by a certain turbulence and crudeness of wit which make him difficult to handle—increasingly difficult to handle, I may say. I forsee trouble with him in the future in connection with the coup to which I have already referred."

"And is it your idea," inquired my father sarcastically, "that we should undertake to assassinate this man for you—out of the kindness of our hearts, as it were, and to stimulate the practise of piracy?"

Murray shook his head, wholly undisturbed.

"I never remove a man I can use," he answered. "Flint is still useful. No, I require a young man to stand at my elbow and assist me in curbing unruly spirits. I promise a great future for such."

"Command of his own pirate craft, no doubt?" pressed my father.

"That would be an offer to draw most stout youths," returned my great-uncle. "Bah, what is piracy, that you and your kind prate against it, Ormerod? Is it any worse in character than four-fifths of the business practised in this world? What are you and those like you but men who seek to deprive others of their lawful gains that you may add to your stores what the others possessed? I take from the wealthy, who can afford to lose what they have dishonestly got, more often than not, and much of what I win I contribute to the Cause to which you gave your first loyalty."

"An admirable code of ethics," observed my father.

" 'Tis as good as any I have discovered," agreed Murray smoothly. "You called me an outlaw a few minutes past. I can not deny it. I am an outlaw because I worked in my own way to reestablish my lawful king. You, who once served that king in exile, turned against him and ruined me, made an outlaw of me. Well, I do what I may; and since Morgan's day no man has played the game so successfully, as any seaman would tell you."

"I'll vouch for that," said my father. "But come to the point. What will you have? That I should apprentice Robert to you to be indentured a good, honest, trusty and skilful pirate?"

"Even so."

My father sat back in his chair.

"I'll not," he said.

Murray treated himself to a pinch of snuff.

"What does our young man himself say?" he asked.

"I say that you offer me no inducement," I answered as shortly as I could.

" 'Odslife," he swore. "No inducement? My dear nephew, I offer you an open, bracing life—for a brief space; a share in a brave venture; an opportunity to rehabilitate your family, to rise to place, title and honor."

"On a pirate's deck!" I jeered.

"From a pirate's quarterdeck," he corrected me gravely. "I am upon my last cruise. The *Royal James* is to vindicate her name. Aye, in years to come she will be regarded as a shrine of loyalty and devotion, and to have sailed with Andrew Murray in her— Why, sir, who remembers today of Robin Hood aught but that he was true to King Richard in adversity?"

The man's surety was amazing.

"This passes all reason," said my father wearily. "You must be insane."

"Not at all," retorted my great-uncle. "I am the leading practitioner of my profession. Winter, Davis, Roberts, Bellamy, all the more noted—ah—pirates of recent years, were small fry compared to me. You would find it difficult to credit me did I inform you of my takings——"

"Blood-money!" roared my father. "Thieves' money!"

"Ah, that unfortunate point of view of yours again," protested Murray. "I tell you, Ormerod, you stand in the boy's way."

"He is not a boy, but a man," snapped my father. "And able to judge his own course."

"So be it."

My great-uncle turned to me once more.

"It appears this decision is left betwixt us two, Nephew Robert," he said. "So I must inform you that I am determined to have your aid in any event—by force, if you will not accompany me reasonably."

There was a snap as a Brazil-nut split apart in Peter's grip. Murray waved an airy hand in his direction.

" 'Tis true that you are the most powerful man I ever met, Corlaer," he remarked; "yet I urge you not to attempt violence. I have sufficient men in the house to overpower you, and I should not hesitate to slay Ormerod or you at need. The boy is the only one of you three whose life hath value to me."

"He means it, Peter," said my father. "Keep your hands down."

"*Ja,*" squeaked Peter.

"You were ever a wise man, Ormerod," resumed my great-uncle. "I venture to congratulate you upon the soundness of your judgment. Now for you, Nephew Robert. Come with me you shall, but I prefer that you come willingly. Therefore I lay before you these inducements: Firstly, we sail upon a venture which hath a color of State business, although a strict legalist would denounce it piratical—you see, I endeavor to deal honestly by you after my fashion; secondly, no harm is intended to you; thirdly, the rewards of our project will be singularly rich; fourthly, I design to exploit the advantages which shall accrue to me solely for your benefit—you, Robert, are my heir, and if I have need of you in the execution of my coup, nonetheless I shall be able to repay you for whatever you do in my behalf a hundredfold, both materially and otherwise. I am, after all, your nearest kin after your father, and I say in all humility my assistance is not to be despised."

From his manner you would have reckoned he was offering me the governorship of a province at the least; and the undeniable charm of the man invested his words with a glamour which was augmented by the virility of his person—and this notwithstanding my fast-rising hatred of him.

"I won't go willingly," I answered. "Even did your arguments tempt me, I should resent your threat of compulsion."

"Admirably spoken," he applauded. "Egad, I perceive you have the proper spirit. You are exactly the lad I require."

I rose, whipped to wrath by the insolence of his assurance.

"I am the lad you'll not get," I shouted. "Call in your bravos, and I'll tear their throats out for you."

"Gently, gently," he remonstrated. "My bravos, as you term them, are not lambs, Nephew Robert, and I must warn you that the killings would not be all on the one side. If you value your father, stand fast."

And he drew from a waistcoat pocket a silver whistle, which he placed to his lips. A thin blast piped through the room, and a dozen hairy seadogs surged in from hall and kitchen. Raps on the two windows indicated that other mounted guard outside.

PETER CORLAER'S little, pig eyes swept the invaders with a single glance, but he did not suspend for a second his steady crushing and munching of nuts. My father's face was a mask of mingled rage and fear—not fear for himself, but for me. He stared at the savage figures, the bared cutlases, the ready pistols, almost with unbelief in the reality of his vision. And certes 'twas a weird spectacle in that orderly house in the town we of the province looked upon as the most advanced in the colonies—and became to me the more weird as I glimpsed next the hall door a dour mahogany face and a hangman look beneath a skrim of black hair, and behind the two a familiar carroty head.

"Ho, there, Darby!" I called out. "What are you doing in such company? Did you know those men for pirates when you drank with them at the Whale's Head?"

"Sure, they ha' taken me into their crew," he answered brazenly.

"Have you turned pirate, Darby?" says my father, seeing him for the first time.

"Oh, aye," said Darby with a swagger. "I'm as cruel wicked as any."

"And 'twas you let them into the house and betrayed your master!" returned my father sadly. "I had not expected this of you, Darby. Have we not been kind to you?"

Darby wiggled uncomfortably.

"Oh, aye; main kind, Master Ormerod," he admitted. "But they would ha' had ye, whether or no. Sure, they're a grand, tricksy crew. And anyway, ye see, I was born to be a pirate. My troth, I was!"

Murray laughed pleasantly.

" 'Tis a valiant youth, and should go far," he observed. "Moreover, he speaks the truth when he says we should have won our way in to you without his aid. The accommodation was convenient, but by no means essential.

"Where is Silver, Master Bones?" he added.

The man with the mahogany face touched his cap.

"John was seeing to it the sarvants was all secure, sir," he answered. "Here he is now."

A gap appeared in the ranks by the

kitchen door, and the one-legged man I had met on the water-front that morning stumped in on his long crutch, as cheerfully serene as any honest householder.

"Was you askin' for me, captain?" he said. "We just finished up behind there—all gagged and roped, Bristol-fashion, safe for a day, sir."

And to me—

"My duty, Master Ormerod, and I hopes we'll know each other better soon."

"I find we shall need the cart, John," said my great-uncle.

"Rambunctious, is he?" answered Silver with a wink. "Well, we has it all ready, and the tarpaulin over it, right here in the garding under the blessed apple-trees. 'Tis only a step to the boats, to be sure."

My father turned very pale.

"You—you— My God, Murray, you can't kidnap the boy this way! Think! There are troops in Fort George. Once the hue and cry is raised you'll be——"

"But it will not be raised," replied Murray calmly. "I regret it, but we shall be obliged to tie up you and Peter so that you will be incapacitated until some kind friend happens to call on the morrow. By that time we shall be at sea."

"You are mad!" cried my father. "Every frigate on the station will be after you."

My great-uncle chuckled mildly.

"That is an old sensation. I have known it for twenty-odd years."

I snatched up the chair upon which I had been sitting and brandished it over his head.

"Call off these scoundrels of yours or I'll batter out your brains," I snarled.

"John," he said, ignoring me, "you will be so kind as to pistol the elder Master Ormerod if his son launches a blow at me."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Silver.

And he leveled a weapon at my father. I knew, without looking behind me, that Peter and I were covered by other men. It was Peter who spoke first.

"Put down der chair, Bob," he ordered quietly.

The man called Black Dog cast the noose of a rope over his head and jerked his arms close to his side.

"*Neen, neen,*" objected Peter, and with no visible effort he snapped the hempen strains.

A gasp went up from the room, and there was a hasty retreat from his neighborhood.

"Pistol that man if you must," called Murray; "but use your cutlases if possible."

"*Neen,*" said Peter again. "We don't fight."

"We might as well be killed now as let them carry off Bob," said my father with a sob in his voice.

"*Neen,*" said Peter a third time. "Deadt, you stay deadt. Perhaps Bob gets away from them some time. Better he be with Murray than he be deadt."

"Intelligently logical," commented Murray. "I commend the sentiment to you, Nephew Robert."

Peter's little eyes glinted toward him.

"I go with Bob," he said.

"No, no," denied Murray quickly. "You were not invited, friend Peter."

"If I don't go, Robert don't go," replied Peter. "Andt you don't go. Perhaps I don't kill you, but if there is shooting you don't get away. *Ja!*"

Murray contemplated this speech.

"Your proposition then," he said, "is that you insist upon sharing my nephew's new career or else will endeavor to secure the deaths of all of us, including his and your own?"

"*Ja,*" answered Peter.

"You may come," decided my great-uncle. "Your muscles should prove useful. John, I fancy we shall require triple bonds on this prisoner."

"Aye, aye, sir," assented Silver. "We ha' plenty o' stout manila. One o' you lads run back and get those coils I left by the stove. That's the proper spirit, Darby. Always willin'. You'll make a rare hand, you will. And how about makin' fast the gentleman as is goin' to stay behind, captain?"

Murray looked at my father, and from him to me.

"Have you reconciled yourselves to what I may justly style the inevitable?" he inquired suavely.

My father collapsed into his chair with a groan.

"If you will not suffer the boy to be hurt!" he exclaimed.

"My word of honor to that," returned my great-uncle very seriously. "His comfort and safety rank ahead of my own, Ormerod, for I anticipate that he is to achieve all those triumphs which fate denied me. 'Tis true I hope to sample them briefly, but—" and for the first time a shadow clouded his face—"I am, as you doubtless know, in my sixty-fourth year, and a fickle Providence, regarding the divinity of which I am inclined to share the skepticism of the French philosophers, is scarce likely to indulge me in a very prolonged extension of life's span. Nor indeed would I have it otherwise. I feel no inclination for the senility of extreme age."

My father eyed him with unaffected puzzlement.

"You are a strange man, Murray. I would I might understand you."

"You can not, so why concern yourself? Well, time presses. We must be off. Do you submit?"

My father bent his head.

"Yes—for his sake, —— you! Robert, no violence. We are in a coil we can not escape for the present; but rest assured I will do everything I can to secure your release."

My great-uncle motioned Silver forward.

"Make Master Ormerod as comfortable as possible, John," he instructed. "Yes, tie him in his chair. By the way, Ormerod, touching your last observation, I would remind you that every shot fired at my ship will be as likely to strike Robert as another. Accept my advice, and leave well enough alone. Within a year possibly—two, at most—the boy will be safe and advanced in fortune beyond your wildest dreams."

"Let me have him back as he is—'tis all I ask," groaned my father.

Murray took snuff.

"A highly correct attitude, sir," he remarked. "Have you more to say? Very well, John; you may affix the gag. No, not that gunnysacking. Here is a silken kerchief will do. And now, friend Peter, we turn to you—and you, Nephew Robert. I would these precautions were unnecessary. Let us trust your inclinations will become more friendly toward me upon closer acquaintance."

CHAPTER IV

AN INKLING OF THE PLOT

MY POOR father's face, with the tears standing in his eyes, was the last thing I saw in the wan light of the guttering candles. The next moment my captors lugged me into the darkness of the garden and pushed me upon a hand-cart such as was used to fetch up the lighter kinds of merchandise from the docks. Peter's immense body already occupied most of the cart's cramped space, and I was squeezed precariously between him and the near side, the which Silver perceiving he prodded Peter into a more restricted compass and then spread a tarpaulin over both of us.

"There ye are, my gentlemen," he said cheerfully. "Safe as a round of beef and a side o' pork, says you—and you says right. Ah, captain, we're ready here whenever you are, sir."

"Proceed then, John," answered my great-uncle's voice. "You remember the way? The Green Lane*, 'tis called. Four men should be sufficient to accompany you. I will go on by another street with the rest of our party."

"Don't ye worry yourself, captain," returned Silver.

Footsteps thudded away on the gravel, and I heard the scratching of the one-legged man's crutch as he stumped in front of us and the cart jolted forward. They evidently went out the back way into a little alley, where their exit was least likely to be observed, and paused while Silver reconnoitered the Green Lane from its cover.

"Not a sail in sight," he said presently. "Dash my buttons what a night! Precious dark it is, and I'm main glad we didn't fetch Pew along, with his bleared deadlights to hold us back. Come along, Black Dog. Yarely, my hearties! If this breeze keeps up——"

We emerged into the Green Lane, heading toward the East River, and a thrill tickled my spine as I heard the chanting tones of old Diggory Leigh, our ward watchman!

"Ten o'clock of a clear, dark night, and the wind in the nor'west. And all's well!"

"Easy, all!" whispered Silver's voice. "Push on, ye swabs; push on! But hold your gab. I'll do the talking."

The steel piece on the butt of his crutch tinkled on the cobbles as he stumped ahead of the cart.

"Ho there, shipmate," he hailed cordially. "And does you do this the whole, livelong night?"

Diggory's lanthorn-stave jingled on the ground.

"I do," he returned in pompous tones. "What keeps you abroad so late? Y'are seafaring men, I judge."

---

* Maiden Lane.

"Now I calls that clever," protested Silver with unconcealed admiration. "You sees us in the dark, and straight off you says, 'Seafaring men.' I can see you're a vigilant watchman, shipmate. I'd hate to be a neefarious fellow in your town. Blow my scuttle-butt, I would!"

Diggory's appreciation of this tribute was mirrored in his voice.

"'Tis essential that our citizens be protected," he answered. "Yet there are those who have accused me of sleeping on watch."

"Skulkers, they be—low-lived skulkers as ever was," Silver assured him. "I know how you feel. Here we've been a-workin' since sunup, a-shiftin' cargo and stowin' it aboard, and I'll lay you a piece of eight the captain never so much as sarves out a extry noggin o' rum."

Diggory's stave jingled again as he sloped it over his shoulder.

"The wisest men are not always those in authority, friend," he said. "Ye might think, from the way some of the Corporation talk, 'twas they bar the night-walkers and wastrels from the city's streets! Bah!"

And his wailing voice receded into Pearl Street.

"What are you night-walkers and wastrels a-sniggering' about?" demanded Silver of his following. "George Merry, I'll lay into you with my crutch. Put some heft behind this here blessed cart. Ain't ye shamed o' yourselves, a-laughin' at a brave, hard-workin' watchman as keeps wicked pirates from liftin' your goods?"

A few hundred feet farther on we rattled off the cobbles on to the planked surface of a wharf.

"That you, John?" growled a voice.

"Aye, aye, Bill. Where's the captain?"

"Gone off in the jollyboat. That 'ere Spanish Irisher is a-waitin' him aboard."

I heard Silver curse under his breath.

"What was you sayin', John?" asked the other man.

"What I was sayin' don't signify, but what I was thinkin' was that there's a deal o' mystery in this business," answered Silver with an edge to his tone. "But there! Why should I consarn myself as am no more'n quartermaster o' the old *Walrus?* You're Flint's mate, Bill, and if it don't tickle yur dignity to risk your neck without knowin' why or what the stake is, why should I explain?"

The other man, whom I now identified as the very brown-faced fellow who had been sitting with Darby in the Whale's Head, replied with a string of oaths.

"——!" he wound up. "Flint hisself don't know much more'n you and me."

"He'll take a lot for a sizzlin', gut-cuttin' fire-eater," rejoined Silver. "I'm —— if I'd eat the humble-pie as is his reg'lar diet. Look at what we been through already! First off we leaves a safe hangout and a rich cruisin'-ground by Madagascar. Then we barges off from an ekally safe lay on the Main. And his bloomin' lordship, not trustin' his own crew, calls a fo'csle council aboard the *Walrus* and asks for volunteers to go with him into New York!"

"No, no," struck in Bones—I could tell him by his voice, which was of a peculiarly hectoring, rasping timbre. "'Twas Flint would have him take *Walrus* men along, not trustin' what he was up to. I heard what was said, John, for Flint had me into the cabin at the end.

"'If you won't say no more, Murray, you won't," says he. 'I know you well enough for that. And as for your —— political combinations they mean nothin' to me 'nless there's money in 'em for my pocket. But I say flatly I won't trust you by your lone in New York; no, nor with only men of your own choosin'. How do I know you maybe won't sell me for your own pardon?'"

Silver pulled the tarpaulin from over our heads.

"If Flint said that 'twas the best speech he ever made," he returned. "All I knows is that Murray came on deck before us all and says as how he has a mission of danger to perform and he knowed there was no daredevils like the old *Walrus* hands, and would a score volunteer?

"'For what do we volunteer, captain, if I may make so bold?' says I.

"'A fair question merits a fair answer, John,' says he. 'And I'll say to all you lads I'm planning a cruise as'll make the fortune of the last one o' you and set us in such a position that those as desires to go ashore and enjoy their ease in comfort can look to receiving free pardons.'

"'Ah, yes, sir,' says I; 'but what might be the nature o' this cruise, and why does we go into New York, where there's sojers, and maybe King's ships?'

"'The sojers won't hurt you, John,'"

says he, 'and if there's King's ships we'll try again. We are goin' in for me to meet one man for a talk under cover, and while I'm a-meetin' of him we'll crimp a likely youth I have my eye upon.'

"And that was all I had out o' him, Bill. I volunteered for blind curiosity, hopin' for to discover what he was up to, and I'm free to say I've had my trouble for my pains."

"You're no worse off'n the rest o' us," growled Bones. "Belay that guff, and get these carcases aboardship. If we miss the ebb there'll be —— to pay. He's no friend o' mine, Murray; but he's kept me in rum and 'backy and spendin'-money since I joined up with him."

"Give Flint some o' the credit, Bill," objected Silver.

"I give him plenty," snarled Bones. "He's a rare fighter, Flint is. But he never had Murray's head to plan—and he knows that as well as me. Aye, for I've heard him say it.

" 'Curse me if I like to bob and prance for the old hellion, Bill,' says he; 'but he has the skill o' the Fiend at our lay. He's lasted twice as long as me or any other.' "

"Skill is right," admitted Silver. "D'ye mind, when we was overhaulin' the brig, he ran up alongside the *Walrus* wi' his speakin'-trumpet out and hailed?

" 'Ahoy, *Walrus*' says he. 'Don't touch her spars or riggin'. Give her a couple o' round shot across her decks. We've got to get rid of her crew, anyway.' "

He chuckled enviously.

"But this isn't gettin' us all back to the *Walrus*, Bill," he added. "Here, George Merry, can't you and your mates handle the big fellow? Two to his head and two to his feet—and drop him easy or he'll stove in the boat. Now, my gentleman—" this to me—"we'll pass you down, too. You must pull a strong oar with the captain for him to be so anxious to get you offshore hale and whole. It'll be place and rank for you, messmate, or a chance to swim wi' the sharks.

"Where's the red-headed little Irisher, Bill?"

"I sent him off with the captain," replied Bones. "Down wi' you, John. We'll cast off."

From where I now lay, propped up in the bow with my head resting on Peter's huge stomach, I could see the wharf a few feet above and the vague figures of the pirates and behind them the shadowy outline of the warehouses and an occasional dim light. Silver—I knew him by his height and a cercertain hunching of the shoulder under which he rested his crutch—turned away as Bones addressed him.

"What of the cart?" he asked.

"That's easy," returned Bones.

And he gave it a shove that sent it splashing into the water off the wharf's end.

"No incriminatin' evidence or what the lawyer sharks calls clues," remarked Silver. "A good job well done, Bill, if you asks me."

He lowered himself to a seat upon the stringpiece of the wharf, dropped the butt of his crutch to the forward thwart, felt about with his one leg and came to rest in front of Peter and me. The crutch he allowed to slip to the bottom of the boat, and in its place he took an oar. Bill Bones found a seat in the stern sheets.

"All clear," muttered Bill. "Give way."

The oars fended off from the wharf, and the boat crept out into the stream, where it felt the full strength of the tide, just beginning to turn. The bow bounced up as the first wave hit it, and Peter, beneath me, emitted a dismal groan through his gag. Silver, bending diligently to his oar, looked over his shoulder.

"You *would* come, messmate," he said. " 'Tis nobody's fault but your own."

Peter gave a convulsive wiggle which almost knocked me out of the boat.

"Here, here," admonished Silver. "That's no way to act. D'ye want to drown us all?"

Another groan from Peter, and he lay still.

"Look sharp," called Bones. "The brig's just ahead."

A RIDING-LIGHT gleamed high above us in the velvet gloom. I heard the faint *slap-slap-slap* of water against an anchored hull. Other lights appeared, the square pattern of stern windows, a great lanthorn hung in the waist. A gruff hail reached us.

"Boat ahoy!"

"Bones comin' aboard."

"Aye, aye, Bill."

As we rounded under her counter a couple of ropes rattled down to us, and I heard the creaking of tackle and hoist. We ground against the dripping black hull, and one of the oarsmen seized the rungs of a ladder which dribbled in the waves.

"Make fast the young 'un first," rasped Bones as he went up the wooden rungs monkey-fashion.

"Aye, aye, Bill," answered Silver, and I became conscious that the one-legged man and another were knotting a loose rope beneath my arm-pits. "All right, above there," called Silver presently.

And to me as the block began to whine:

"Watch out for your head, my master. Up you go! All the sensations as comes to a poor, honest pirate as is hung in chains at Execution Dock."

The rope tautened; the unseen block whined louder; and I rose involuntarily from my position across Peter's belly. My feet were jerked from a thwart, and I kicked the air. The grunts of men hauling in unison floated from the brig's deck, and as I rose faster I commenced to swing like a pendulum.

And now I understood Silver's warning as to my head, for I came into violent collision with the brig's hull and by mere luck escaped with a bruised shoulder instead of a broken skull. I would have cried out, I think, but the gag restrained me; and inside of a minute I was dangling over the bulwarks, feet kicking frantically for standing room. A man caught me by one arm and drew me inboard, shouting the while to "slacken away!" and so I came down again with a bump that was like to crack my knee-caps, deposited as so much cargo upon the pitchy deck.

Dazed by treatment I had never sustained before, I stood heedless as the ropes were unfastened beneath my arm-pits, my bonds slipped off and the gag extracted from my aching jaws. I was just beginning to take in the aspect of my surroundings when Corlaer's cask of a body topped the bulwarks, swung with ludicrous unconcern for an instant as I dare say mine had done and then lurched in and crashed to the deck. The Dutchman was purple in the face, with white spots dotting the congested area of his cheeks, and gasping for breath. His stomach heaved tumultuously as the gag was removed.

"What ails you, Peter?" I cried.

"Der water," he moaned. "It makes me sick."

And sick he was—violently.

I helped him to the side as a whistle trilled.

"Capstan men for'ard," shouted a voice.

"What d'ye say?" called Bill Bones. "Who ordered the anchor up? The longboat's still alongside."

"Captain's orders," rumbled the answer from the darkness. "Said to cat the anchor, Bill, and get sail on her. We'm to start so soon as the Spanisher goes off—his boat's under the sta'b'd gangway."

Bones ripped off an admirable stream of oaths.

"Might ha' told me," he complained. "Slack aft the longboat, a pair o' you. Is the jollyboat hove up? Aloft, topmen! Clear the braces. John, you'd better take the helm. I s'pose his lordship'll come up to con us out when he gets good and ready, seein' he's the only one o' us as knows his way about this blasted harbor!"

"Aye, aye, Bill."

Silver stumped out of the shadow for'ard into the glare of the big lanthorn that swung from a lower yard of the mainmast over the waist.

"But what about our pris'ners?" Silver asked.

Mr. Bones cast an uneasy glance at us.

"I can't have that there bloomin' volcano a-muckin' up the decks, let alone cabin or fo'csle. Leave 'em be, John. They can't do no harm, and any man as goes into that water tonight will freeze before he makes the shore."

"Spoke most accurate," Silver agreed in his cheerful way.

The rascal had a manner which contrived to invest whatever he said to you—to any one—with the implication that you were the most intelligent person he had ever had to do with and that it was an honor to obey and serve you.

He disappeared aft now, and Bones with him. I heard the latter continuing to shout orders; and there was a constant bustle of men running back and forth over the decks, a clattering of ropes and shrieking of falls and blocks. For'ard sounded an ordered trampling of feet and a chorus of rough voices bellowing the wild sea-song I had heard in the Whale's Head Tavern:

"Fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for the rest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!

Corlaer, weak as a rag, sank in a heap of buckskin in a dark corner by the bulwarks.

"*Neen, neen,*" he answered when I would have helped him. "Not'ings, Bob. I get better by and by. Der salt water—it is always so with me."

"I'll get you some rum," I said firmly.

And, rising, I was on the point of seeking the nearest man to ask where a drink might be obtained when footsteps clicked on the deck behind me.

"THEY are a dangerous company," said a voice with an ummistakable brogue to it.

"What would you?" returned my great-uncle.

I could imagine the graceful shrug which went with the words.

"We could not employ his Majesty's people in such a business. And all things considered, my fellows can handle it far better and more expeditiously."

They passed through the rays of the lanthorn which swung from the mainyard. Aye, the first speaker was Colonel O'Donnell. The little Irish maid! His daughter. My father had been right in his suspicions.

But what could be the tie of interest between a colonel in the Army of the King of Spain and an outlaw who had defied the whole structure of civilization? A Jacobite plot? It seemed preposterous!

"'Tis my daughter I was thinking of," explained O'Donnell as they reached the starboard gangway close by where I stood over Peter's prostrate form.

"Ah!"

My great-uncle went through his courtly formula of taking snuff, and I watched him, fascinated.

"Your forebodings do you credit, *chevalier*. But you have no cause for concern. For reasons which I need not go into I have with me here men from the crew of my associate. On board the *Royal James* I think I may promise you and your daughter all the deference you might receive upon a King's ship. I will go so far as to say that I have taken steps to secure you additional protection. My great-nephew—and heir—of whom I have spoken to you, sails with me, a fine youth who shall yet make his mark in the world."

"But a woman on a pirate ship!" protested O'Donnell anew.

"My dear sir, Rule Four of the Code of Articles under which our company is governed—does it surprize you that we have our own laws?—forbids the taking and keeping of women as spoil aboard our ships. We have had experience in the past of the evils which flow in the wake of a struggle for women's favors."

"Shall you not flout your own rule if my daughter comes aboard?" pressed the Irishman.

"She will not come as a prisoner, but as a guest," returned Murray blandly. "After all, colonel, the *Royal James* is my ship—and in that respect differs from most outlaw craft which are held by the entire crew as a community. No, no; you need not concern yourself."

"I like it not, I say!" persisted O'Donnell. "Why did you bid me bring her? You were hot for her coming so soon as you heard I had a daughter."

"Would you have left her by her lone in a strange country?" answered my great-uncle impatiently. "Tut, man, be sensible. Who would suspect a man who had his daughter with him? 'Tis true this enterprise is fraught with danger, but no maid can go through life without sniffing peril. We will guard her as we shall the treasure."

"I'll hold you to that," rapped O'Donnell as he climbed over the bulwarks and felt for the ladder. "I am not proud of myself when I think of her innocence. Holy saints, what a coil! Well, well, no matter. I must be going, for the night wanes."

"Yes," assented Murray. "And stir your frigate's captain to a swift passage."

The Irishman nodded.

"If necessary we'll pass by the Havana. Luckily Porto Bello is the *intendente's* chief worry. You'll hover, then, off Mona Passage?"

"Aye, from the south tip of Hispaniola to the north of Porto Rico, save it storms, when we'll run for shelter in the Bay of Samana, where the old buccaneers were wont to lie. Diego can find us. He has done it before. Just give him ample time."

"So soon as the *Santissima Trinidad* has her orders Diego shall know."

He started to descend and then climbed back.

"She has heavy metal, Murray? Are you certain——"

My great-uncle laughed.

"Be at your ease upon that point, *chevalier*. I have always feared the *Royal James* might be chased by a frigate too swift for her, and her battery hath been planned with an eye to that eventuality."

"But alone?"

"Aye, alone! We could take two Spaniards of the *Santissima Trinidad's* metal. I fear I must bid you good evening, though. Hark!"

The bell of the Spanish frigate rang out eight times.

"Midnight!" exclaimed O'Donnell. "Can you be gone by dawn?"

"My dear sir," returned my uncle lightly, "this brig will never be seen again—anywhere—by anybody."

O'Donnell shivered.

"Good night," he said abruptly, and his head vanished behind the bulwarks.

I heard the rattle of oars, a low order in Spanish, the steady splash and spatter of rowers as the boat pulled away. My great-uncle watched it for a moment, then turned toward where I stood.

"Well, Nephew Robert, what did you make of us?" he inquired.

I contrived to keep my voice level, for I would not give him the satisfaction of supposing he had startled me.

"That you are engaged in deeper villainy even than my father feared."

"You have a narrow-minded view of life," he remarked. "However, 'tis a defect can be remedied by experience. By the way, do not jump to conclusions from what you overheard. You shall have the whole tale anon, but until you possess a more intimate knowledge of the situation you are better off in ignorance."

"I am no pirate, nor shall I be."

"Why make hasty statements, Robert?"

A hail came from Bones for'ard.

"Anchor a-cat, captain!"

"Very good, Master Bones," replied my great-uncle. "You may trip, and we will make all sail, if you please."

"Aye, aye, captain."

Peter groaned dolefully at the fateful words, and Murray stepped closer.

"What is that beside you, Robert?" he asked quickly. "Did our good friend Peter come to harm?"

"The water's motion sickens him."

"Ah! Strange how the strongest men succumb to it. We will have him carried below. I should have told you before this that I design to make you both as comfortable as possible. You berth aft with me. On the brig I can offer you very limited hospitality, but on the *Royal James* you shall have the comforts of an admiral."

"I want no comforts," I answered coldly. "Any comforts you may offer me would be a mockery. My very being here is a discomfort most insufferable."

He stiffened.

"'Sdeath, sirrah! Bear in mind that I am your elder in years and deserving of respect for my relationship."

"To me you are a singularly bloody pirate, and that is all."

"The injustice of youth!" he commented evenly. "I was the uncle and tender guardian of the mother you never knew, Robert."

"I share my father's feelings upon that point," I cried, and raised my hand in a threatening gesture.

He did not stir.

"Your conversion will be quite as difficult as I had foreseen," he said. "No, you would gain naught by striking me. Impartially I may recommend you to adopt an attitude which will secure you the maximum of liberty and opportunity. Of what avail for you to force yourself into confinement?"

"Sir," I returned, "be convinced of this: The day you attack a defenseless ship I will slay as many of you as I can and contentedly die."

It has a sound of theatricalism now, but I meant it at the time.

"I purpose nothing of that sort for you," answered my great-uncle. "And while I am tempted to argue you out of a position founded upon a false ethical basis, I shall content myself with the observation that you would do well to hold your temper in leash until you find a need for its employ."

He glanced overside.

"I see we are under weigh. I must ask you to excuse me for the present, Robert. I am constrained to serve as pilot."

He raised his little silver whistle, and its shrill call fetched several of the crew aft.

"Aye, aye, captain." It was Bones. "What's your wish, sir?"

"Have this poor fellow—" Murray gestured toward Corlaer's recumbent form—"carried to one of the staterooms. Use him gently. Bid the Irish boy—what's his name? Oh, Darby!—bid Darby tend him and fetch him what he requires.

"This gentleman, here—" he indicated me—"is my great-nephew, Master Bones. It may be he will succeed me in command of the *Royal James* some day, although he is not with us of his own wish as yet. He is to have complete freedom except he undertake to achieve aught to our disadvantage. Pass the word to the men, if you please."

"That's a queer lay," growled Bones. "Is he friend or enemy, captain?"

"An intelligent question," replied my great-uncle. "We may call him an enemy who is to be treated as nearly as possible as a friend."

"Blasted if I see any sense in it," affirmed Bones. "But whatever you says, captain."

"Exactly," said my great-uncle.

And to me he added:

"Oblige yourself, Robert. There is a berth waiting for you, or you may remain on deck and take a lesson in seamanship."

I cast my eye astern at the lights of New York, so low, so scattered, already so far away.

"I'll go below and do what I may for Peter," I decided.

"As you choose," responded my extraordinary relative, and walked aft.

"Stir your stumps, ye lousy swabs," roared Bones to his men. "Hitch on to this here land-whale. —— my lights and gizzard if I ever see such a monstrous heap o' human flesh! We'd oughter take him to the South Seas and sell him to the canneybals. That's all he's good for. Come on, young gentleman, you may be the captain's nevvy or by-blow or whatever 'twas he called ye, but everybody works on this ship. Lend a hand."

I obeyed him in silence, while he and the others cursed and blasphemed with a fluency defying description. What a company! Except in Murray's presence they owned no discipline, accepted no restraint. Palpably they hated as well as feared him, and I found myself wondering how secure a hold he had upon their passions. Let them once cast off the spell of his magnetism and superior wickedness, and they would become so many irresponsible agents of lust and destruction.

I shuddered and was glad of the hooded cabin-lamp as we stowed Peter's limp body into the constricted space of a bunk; gladder still when they tramped away and left me alone with the Dutchman.

Through a porthole the lights of New York winked farewell to me. I was as frightened as a child by himself for the first time in the dark.

CHAPTER V

ABOARD THE BRIG

I WOKE with a ray of sunshine streaming across my face through the thick, greenish glass of a deadlight and an odd feeling of contentment. Mice were cheeping in the paneling at my elbow; the timbers and planking of the hull were groaning and snorting; there was a soothing *swissh-ssh* of divided waters; and the brig herself was swaying easily in a following sea.

Corlaer was sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion, and I was at pains not to disturb him as I slipped to the floor, opened the door and entered the main cabin. This was deserted save for the boy Darby, who was curled up on the seat under the stern windows, peering out at the brig's creamy wake. He heard the door close after me and swiveled round at once, landing lightly on his feet as if he had been to sea for years.

"Och, Master Bob," says he, "I thought ye'd never wake up. Ah, it's the grand, grand day. And do ye smell the brine in the air? It makes the toes of your two feet dance, whether ye will or no—troth, it does."

'Twas impossible to nourish resentment against the boy for his betrayal of us. He was as naturally lawless and unmoral as a young wolf, but I could not resist a jeer at his recent transformation.

"And how does it seem to be a pirate, Darby?"

"Oh, fine! Sure, I always knew I wasn't intended for a bond-boy to run errands and carry bales. Ah, it's the grand life, Master Bob! They tell me himself—" he jerked his thumb toward the door of a stateroom opposite that in which Peter and I were berthed—"is own uncle to ye, and some day, if ye choose, ye can be as great as him. Faith, and I know what my choice would be!"

"Is it your idea that pirates never work?" I inquired.

His face fell a trifle.

"Och, there's work everywhere ye go, bad 'cess to it! It's, 'Darby, lend a hand here!' Or, 'Darby, catch hold o' this rope!' Or, 'Darby, fetch me a pannikin o' rum!' Darby, this and Darby that the night long."

His face lightened again.

"But I'm to have my own cutlas and two pistols for my belt, and they say I'm good luck."

"Good Luck? How's that?"

"Sure, it's my hair, I think. Flint—him that this crew sail with by usual—he has a liking for a red-headed lad. Such as meself brings him luck, so they swear, and Long John——"

"Who?"

"Long John—Master Silver, to be sure—him with the one leg we talked to by the shore yesterday—he says I'll go far with Flint."

I had to laugh at my own bemusement at the picture Darby's remark called up. Yesterday morning at this hour I had been laboring industriously in the counting-room in Pearl Street. And how much had happened since then! I harked back to my setting-forth for the Bristol packet, the casual conversation with the one-legged mariner—how skilfully he had pumped me and annexed Darby to his plot!—the encounter with the Irish maid——

With this I curbed my recollections. Thought of Moira O'Donnell was unpleasant, for I could not rid my mind of the suspicion that she must be bound up in some way in the schemes her father worked at in cooperation with my great-uncle.

But there! I found relief in this reflection. Certes, her father could be no worse than my relative; and here was I, innocent of any art or part in Murray's devious ploys, yet tossed into the grip of their mechanism as ruthlessly as if my life depended upon his success. And perhaps it did. What more natural, then, than that she was equally innocent? Aye, from the conversation betwixt the two conspirators I had overheard the night before it appeared that she *was* innocent, probably in greater ignorance of her father's plans than I, else how explain O'Donnell's concern upon discovering the character of the men with whom she was to be thrown in contact?

And this aroused a further recollection. What was it the lass had said as we parted?

"Here our paths diverge."

She would not have said that had she known all, for there had been no necessity for the lie. Doubt not, she was in entire ignorance of the black evil these two plotted! I was glad with a great burst of exultation which must have showed itself in my face, for Darby exclaimed:

"There was a good fairy flicked a wing over you, Master Bob! Glory, but ye had the happy thought. Will he throw in with us and be a pirate chief? Troth, there'd be no better."

"Not I, Darby; but I will have a bite to eat, if such there be aboard a pirate craft."

"Lashin's of everything in nature," rejoined Darby briskly. "Sit to the table yon, and I'll fetch it from the galley."

The table was set and ready, not with coarse crockery and steel forks, knives and spoons, but with dainty china, heavy silverware and fine napery, too. I commented on this when Darby returned, balancing smoking dishes and a jug of hot chocolate upon a tray.

" 'Tis the way himself—" his thumb indicated the starboard stateroom door—"will live. The best of everything he'll have, and on his own ship nigger slaves to serve him, and they in liveries like grand gentlemen have. Whisht!"

His voice sank to a whisper.

"He's a terrible unchancy fellow, yon, Master Bob. Not for all the gold onzas Long John do be always talkin' of would I ha' *him* for uncle! No, no! I'll sail with Flint, rather. The eye to him—and the soft voice and quiet ways! And him as swift to cut your throat or walk ye down the plank as Flint; aye, and swifter! I ha' the creepies on my back whiles I look at him.

"Flint, now, he's main different, Long John says. He'll swig rum wi' any man, and if he wants your life ye'll be in no doubt of that same; and he curses better'n Bill Bones."

"You seem to have experienced no trouble in becoming intimate with your new companions, Darby," I remarked.

"It's me head done it," returned Darby, unabashed. "As I told ye, it brings good luck."

"Not to me," I retorted with a grin.

"And don't ye be too sure," he flashed. "We'll maybe sail a long ways together; and I'm your friend, Master Bob, for ye were never one to let me be put upon in the counting-room."

"Humph," said I. "That is to be seen. Where is 'himself,' as you call him?"

"Asleep in his berth. Troth, he was up until dawn conning the brig through the harbor shoals."

"Are we outside?"

"Sure, we're by and beyond what they call Sandy Hook. There's only the wide ocean in front."

"I'm for the deck then," I answered. "Keep an ear on Master Corlaer, Darby. If he craves food fetch him some of this chocolate."

"Leave him to me," said Darby confidently. "He's another I like fine. Wasn't it him brought me the Injun scalp and the knife wi' blood on it? Oh, ye must both turn pirate! We'd make a grand crew, just the three of us."

THE companionway was empty, and I met nobody until I had climbed to the deck. The brig was running free before a smart nor'west breeze, and there was just enough of a sea to toss an occasional shower of spray over the bows. The wind was booming in the hollow of the sails, and the cordage sang like a great harp. Sea-birds were circling the mast-tops and skimming the waves with occasional raucous cries. And over all the sun cast a warm, golden radiance that held a magic spell.

I understood now the contentment with which I had wakened, although indeed 'twas passing strange that I so readily adapted myself to the sea and its ways, seeing that all my life I had never been beyond the waters of the inner harbor. Yet 'tis the fact I had no discomfort or misgiving and even acquired instinctively the sailor's tricks of standing and walking, as was commented upon by no less an authority than John Silver.

The deck was deserted for'ard. One man was lashed in the main cross-trees, sweeping the entire circuit of the horizon with a spyglass. Aft there were only Silver and another fellow at the wheel. The one-legged man waved to me with his crutch from his seat on the cabin skylight.

"Come and talk with Long John, Master Ormerod," he called. "Where did ye find them sea-legs o' yourn? You walks like a blasted admiral, no less."

"I found them below," I answered, for the life of me unable to resist the scoundrel's ingratiating manner. "Where are the rest of your company?"

He laughed and winked at the man at the wheel, an awful-looking creature, so heavy of shoulder as to appear deformed, with a green shade over deeply sunken eyes that were all pitted around with tiny blue scars.

"Ha, ha! Our young gentleman says to himself, says he: 'Only two on deck, one on 'em wi' a single leg, t'other all but blind. And here's me as is young and sturdy.' A clean field, says you, Master Ormerod; but you're failin' to reckon on John's crutch, which same can be a very nasty weapon at need; and if Pew's eyes don't see far he can shoot by ear as well as most o' us by sight."

I shook my head.

"Rascals as thorough as you, Silver, would never leave an opportunity like that. 'Tis true I have had no sea-service, but I have fought with the savages upon our northern frontier.

"I'll not move until I see a clear path before me."

He laughed uproariously at this.

"Now that 'ere's a good joke on me! Might ha' knowed you wasn't as open as your face. You'll learn fast, you will, Master Ormerod. I'll lay four spade-guineas to that. Bear over just a p'int, Ezra, matey. Aye, so!"

"Is that foretops'l drawin' full, John?" asked the man with the green eye-shade in a voice that was singularly soft.

Silver squinted aloft.

"She'll do," he decided.

"Would you mind telling me how a blind man can steer?" I inquired.

The man with the green eye-shade chuckled in a way to chill your blood, so sardonic, so overpoweringly evil was the caliber of the mirth it suggested.

"A poor, blind man has to earn his bread and 'backy somehow, young sir," he answered unctuously.

"Don't go to makin' up your mind Pew can't see everything, Master Ormerod," said Silver, shifting his crutch. "I'd hate to have him decide to take a shot at me. Steer? Well now, what's needed in steerin'? A strong arm, says you, and you says true. Also and likewise, an ear for canvas. Lastly and leastwise, an eye for the course.

"Any man can read a compass, young gentleman; but not every sailorman can feel how his ship takes the wind and meet his rudder quick when she wants meetin'. Pew can. Give him some one like me to play eyes for him, and he'll steer as straight a course as a packet-boat wi' a bonus on the voyage."

"Are there many cripples in your crew?" I asked curiously.

"Cripples?" repeated Silver. "It all depends on what you might mean. There's cripples and cripples. Me and Pew now, we got ours in the same broadside. 'Twas a Injyman wi' a fighting master, and she stood to us, board and board."

He slapped the stump of his thigh.

"An eighteen-pounder did that. *Whoof!* Off she went. Pew, he was rammin' home a charge and leaned out through the port and caught the flash of a carronade. 'Tain't good for the eyes, nowise; but as I was a-sayin', don't you ever go for to believe Pew can't see. He's surprizin', he is.

"But we was talkin' of cripples. Yes, there's cripples and cripples. Some on 'em ye pays their screw——"

"Their what?" I interrupted.

"Their screw, the what d'ye call it—insurance money. So much we get from the prize money extry for the hurt. Pew, he got a thousand pounds, which same he blowed in three nights in St. Pierre. D'ye mind, Ezra? I got eight hundred pounds for my leg—and fair enough, if you asks me."

"And that eight hundred pounds I'll gamble you ha' stowed away in a safe hole, John," said Pew with a gentleness which gave the words a peculiarly sinister significance.

Silver nodded almost complacently.

"What I gets, I keeps. I'm none o' your free spenders, rich today, poor tomorrow. Some day I'll be retirin' from piratin', and then I'll aim to ride in my own coach and sit in Parleyment."

"You'll have to sail your own ship first, John," said Pew, and the remark was fraught with implications that made me turn cold at the pit of my stomach.

It was as if you could see the trail of bloodshed and suffering Silver would blaze to possess that ship and to exploit her to advantage.

"And why not?" returned Silver vigorously. "We'll name no names, Ezra, but captains can't live for ever. Some is aged and some soaks theirselves in rum. You never know! You never know!"

"There's Bill Bones, as has ideas on the subjeck," remarked Pew.

And he contrived to make me feel the horror of a long-drawn-out feud and rivalry.

"Yes, there's Bill," ruminated Silver. "Flint's mate, is Bill. Flint's best pal, is Bill. Flint's confeydantey, some says is Bill. Well, well! But we was talkin' o' cripples and how a blind man can steer, which is a long way off from Bill, who isn't neither crippled nor blind, and maybe has hopes, so he has, when he remembers that."

Pew laughed so coldly, with such demoniac inhumanity, that I experienced a sudden fellow-feeling for Master Bones, distasteful as I had found him—also, a pronounced desire to change the subject. The bare proximity to such whole-souled, heartless cruelty was unpleasant.

"Do you commonly indulge in exploits like yesterday's, Silver?" I asked.

He cocked his head on one side.

"Exploits? Yesterday? Meanin' the disposition of yourself? We-ell, no, sir; not reg'larly, I'd say, Ezra."

"Not by a capful o' onzas," agreed Pew.

"I'm no man for makin' trouble," continued Silver, "but there's them as might say the captain was a mite rash."

"Why don't you call him by his name?"

Silver gave me an odd look.

"There's some names as is better off unmentioned in conversation," he said. "We'll call him the captain wi' your kind leave and permission, sir."

"Call him what you please," I answered; "but I should think it was insanity for men with your reputations to venture into New York. Why, the second mate of that Bristol packet had seen Captain Murray, and would have known him."

"Ah!" said Silver, grinning. "But he didn't see the captain, which is more to the point, my master; nor he wouldn't have had the chance to see him in any case. 'Cause why? 'Cause the captain come ashore most careful in the dusk wi' his cloak around his face and three stout hearties to fend off inquisitive strangers."

"But the rest of you——"

"Now, Master Ormerod, what honest sailorman a-tremblin' for his life is goin' to remember faces out o' a crew o' pirates he sees on a shot-up deck? All he thinks of, says you, is a lot of villains as has likely slaughtered his messmates and looted his ship, and quite right. Why, I've been stood treat in Kingston by a skipper I'd stripped two months past—but that was afore I lost my leg, which bein' in other seas ain't as yet a mark of identification on me in these parts."

"And did you take this ship designedly to carry you into New York?"

"You might say truthfully she was the

best fitted for it of several," he acknowledged. "Blow my other stick off if she was good for anything else."

"Not forty pounds in her," mumbled Pew, twiddling the wheel-spokes.

"Her crew——"

Silver raised his eyebrows and gave me a slow wink.

"Poor unfortunates! 'Twas one time we couldn't take chances."

Pew's chuckle trickled icily from under the eye-shade which cast a green blur over his whole lower face.

"I suppose there is a hell for such as you," I said, trying to keep my voice steady.

"Some says there is and some says there isn't," answered Silver reasonably. "No use to worry, says I."

I WAS so wrought up that I think I must have come to blows with them but for a fortunate diversion. Bones and several other men emerged from the fo'csle hatch, yawning and stretching their arms, evidently having just arisen from sleep. At the same moment Peter Corlaer climbed from the cabin companionway, lurched for a moment on his feet and then staggered precariously toward the bulwarks. I started for'ard to aid him, and Bones ran aft with a loud yell.

"Don't ye spoil my decks, ye fat cow!" he shouted.

Poor Peter, regardless of both of us, seized a stay and clung to it abjectly, quite helpless. Bones reached him first and gave him a shove which sent him plunging into the scuppers head first.

"Get up," snarled Bones, and dealt him a vicious kick with a heavy sea-boot.

Peter groaned, and I caught Bones by the arm.

"—— you for a coward!" I shouted. "Captain Murray bade you use us gently. Is this how you obey?"

He snatched free of me and yanked out a knife.

"Obey, ye lousy lubber!" he howled. "I'm Flint's mate, and I'll show ye who can say obey to me. Get back there or I'll cut your heart out and eat it afore ye."

I looked about me for a weapon, anxious to give him a lesson; but there was not a sign of anything handy, and I backed away cautiously from the menace of his knife. He had been drinking through the night on top of liberal potations during the previous day, and the effect was to render him quite insensible to any rule now that his passions were aroused. Silver shouted to him to let us be, as did one or two others; but his only answer was a string of the curses in which he was so proficient, and he continued to circle after me.

For myself I was not greatly frightened, for, as it chanced, knife-fighting was an art in which I was somewhat expert, thanks to instruction from my father's Indian friends; but I was concerned lest the scoundrel make a dart at Peter and slay the Dutchman as he lay inert. Judge of my amazement then when Peter swayed to his feet, holding on to the bulwarks to pull himself erect. His face was white, but he abandoned his support without hesitation and advanced, crooked-legged, across the deck toward us.

"I take him, Bob," he said.

I jumped between him and Bones in time to stop the pirate's rush, dodging a knife-thrust by the width of my coat sleeve.

"Keep away, Peter," I panted. "I can handle him. You can't. You'll——"

"I take him," repeated Corlaer.

He reached out his hand, grasped my shoulder and spun me from his path as easily as if I had been a child. And I did not attempt to return to his side, for I had felt the strength in his arm and knew that I had no cause to question his ability to take care of himself against any man, however armed.

Bones stared at him for a moment with a mixture of rage and surprize.

"D'ye *want* your —— throat cut?" he sneered. "Here, turn your head and I'll take an ear instead. There's naught in slaying a cow like you."

Peter said nothing, simply stood there before him weaponless, arms slightly bent, legs crooked at the knees. The Dutchman's little eyes, almost buried from sight in his face, glittered with a steely menace.

"Let him be, Bill," called Silver again—was I wrong in fancying his tone unduly officious, provocative?

"I'm —— if I do," rasped Bones. "If he wants it, he'll get it."

He sprang at Peter with knife upraised, aiming to slash his throat; but Peter moved with lightning speed to counter him. One immense arm, thick as a tree-bough, shot out and imprisoned the wrist of the knife-hand; a twist, and the knife pinged on the deck. The other arm captured a thigh, and Bones was reared above Peter's head.

Peter gave him a preliminary shake as if to prove to him how completely he was in his power and started to walk back to the lee bulwark. Bones shrieked like the lost soul he was, certain that Peter intended to cast him into the sea; but halfway across the deck Peter came to a loose halyard. He lowered Bones carelessly, tucked him under one arm and proceeded to reeve a landsman's slip-noose. We all watched him with utter fascination, and it is an indication of the pirates' code in such affairs that none of them intervened. But Peter was not to hang Master Bones.

"Your object is no doubt praiseworthy, friend Peter," remarked my great-uncle from the cabin companionway behind us, "but I fear I must request you to let the man go. He is of some value to a friend of mine."

Peter regarded Murray curiously.

"He knifes Robert and me—*ja*," answered the Dutchman.

"He will not do it again," Murray assured him. "Master Bones!"

Peter regretfully unhitched the noose from Bones' neck and administered a shove which sent him reeling across the deck, to carom into the butt of the mizzenmast, recoiling with the loss of a broken tooth and ending up in a battered heap at Murray's feet. My great-uncle regarded the fellow with obvious displeasure.

"Stand up, Master Bones," he said.

Bones stumbled to his feet, bleeding from several cuts and scratches. He was very plainly frightened at what lay ahead of him.

"Master Bones," resumed my great-uncle, "you are for the present under my command, and I happen to have somewhat old-fashioned theories as regards discipline and the carrying out of orders. You have recently disobeyed an order of mine."

"Sure, I didn't——"

"Master Bones," my uncle went on without raising his voice, "did you ever know a man named Fotherill—Jack, I believe, was the given name?"

Bones nodded, unable to speak.

"And what did I order done to him, Master Bones?" Bones moistened his lips.

"Keel-hauled, he was."

"Correct," agreed my great-uncle. "Keel-hauled. A most expressive phrase, Robert," he added to me. "Technically, I should explain, it involves drawing a man under the keel of a vessel. It has—shall we say?—unpleasant consequences."

He turned to Bones.

"No man disobeys an order of mine more than once, Master Bones. That is all. You may go for'ard."

The man started to slouch off, wiping the blood from his cheek with his coat sleeve; but Peter stepped in front of him.

The Dutchman took an oaken belaying-pin from the rack around the mizzenmast, held it out toward Bones and the others and calmly broke it in two with his bare hands and tossed the fragments overside.

"Admirable!" exclaimed my great-uncle. "What words could hope to express so much as that gesture? And it intrigues me to note that Corlaer has a distinct taste for the dramatic. I trust that you are recovering from the seasickness, friend Peter?"

"I get well, *ja*," answered Peter.

"Then perhaps you will come below and join me at breakfast?" Peter looked unhappy—he loved his food, did Peter.

"*Neen*," he said simply. "If I eat, I get sick."

"You have my sympathy," replied my great-uncle with unfailing courtesy. "I advise a modest diet for a day or two, with an occasional dram of liquor to warm the stomach, and then I prophesy you will become as good a sailor as any of us. You, Robert, I perceive to have made yourself instantly at home upon the strange element. That is excellent. You shall yet prove a credit to me. Do you feel sufficiently stimulated by your new experiences to partake of a second meal so early in the day?"

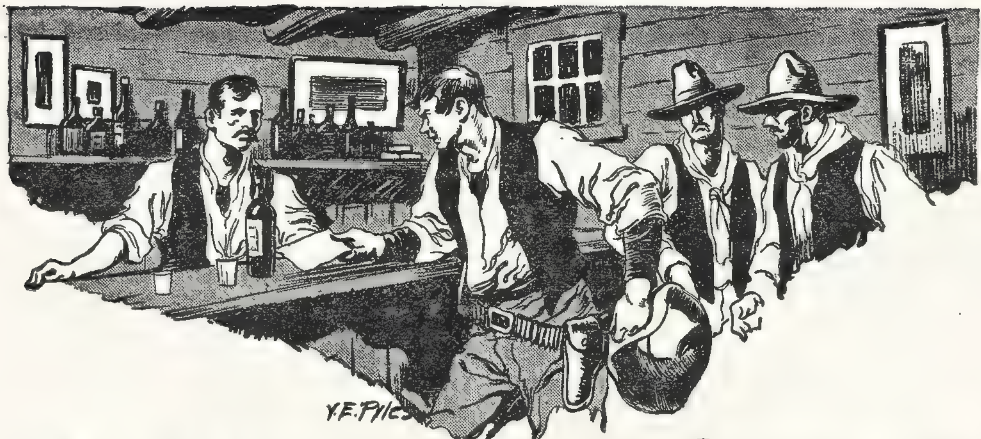
"I have just been hearing what became of the lawful crew of this vessel," I answered. "It left me no appetite for food."

"Regrettable," he returned sadly. "Life is a hard business, Robert, as you have yet to learn. Mercy is as often as not a mistaken policy, a vice as much as a virtue. Silver, has the lookout sighted any vessel?"

"Not a sail since we cleared Sandy Hook, sir," the one-legged man answered briskly.

"Very good. Keep on this course and call me at once should a sail show in any quarter." And he descended with proper dignity to his breakfast.

TO BE CONTINUED.



The Undesirable Svenson

by Conroy Kroder

Author of "The Salute," "Trouble in Company D," etc.

NELS SVENSON:
You are warned to leave the city within twenty-four hours. THE COMMITTEE OF VIGILANCE,
No. 67, *Secretary.*
San Francisco, July 29, 1851

AS USUAL, the delivery of that warning created a considerable sensation.

In their struggle with the criminal "Hounds" — that being the thieves' own name for their brotherhood—for control of youthful and unorganized San Francisco, the Vigilantes had gained in strength until such a notice could be disobeyed only at the price of bitter regret later. Everybody in the crowded El Dorado knew that including the suddenly sobered Svenson to whom the notice had been so unexpectedly handed, and who stood staring at it with mingled anger and incredulity on his flushed, heavy-featured, blond-bearded, dangerous-looking face.

The blare of the orchestra grew even more discordant as its members craned down from the balcony to observe Svenson. For a moment a hush came over the talk of the crowd, although the rattle of chips, the whir of wheels, the clicking of balls, and the drone of the gamblers, "Place your bets, gentlemen," went on uninterrupted.

"W'at you tank, py——!"

Angrily Svenson glared after the trio of stern-faced men who had brought him the note, and who had then turned without a word toward the door. Instantly, however, surprize at the distinctness of his own tones mitigated his anger. Nor was he less surprized that he could now actually pick out individual features in the swaying blur of men that filled the El Dorado.

Truly, he was almost sobered. Slowly grievance at that unwelcome fact arose within him. Ended was the beatific feeling of riding on top of the world, which he had enjoyed for an uncertain number of days, and which had been tempered only slightly by a vague consciousness of an enormous folly. Ended also—as a glance around showed him—was the admiration of the groundlings at his Samson-like power of juggling kegs and casks of whisky—admiration that had given a final fillip to his intoxication.

Three minutes before, plaudits had come to him over the clear space which he had demanded for his performance; but now that same space was bridged only by chilly looks, glances askance and cautious. Thus deserted, he moved ponderously and rather sorrowfully toward the bar, a symbolic noosed rope rising before his imagination as he coupled the warning he had received with certain stories he had heard of the Vigilance Committee.

"The Undesirable Svenson," copyright, 1924, by Conroy Kroder.

“Py——,” he said truthfully to the bartender after ordering a drink, “Ay dunno w’y dey give me dis.”

But the bartender refrained from hearing Svenson’s voice. Only he gazed with a steadfast eye at the damning notice in Svenson’s hand, reaching carelessly the while under the red-wood bar for his customary source of authority.

Now, ordinarily this would not have been safe. Svenson’s temper and muscles were as explosive as his strength was great, and the bartender’s mace would hardly have served him if Svenson had started. But that little slip of paper possessed a taming quality.

“Say, w’at’s de matter?” he asked, not angrily. “You no like mine dust, eh?”

The bartender shifted his gaze, and then turned abruptly away.

Out of the corner of his eye he had caught the nod of a small gray man with a limp and a cane who had come up to the bar about ten feet to Svenson’s left. Gray as to clothes, as to face, as to eyes; sober and gray as to personality too, he seemed; only with a sharp, quick glance, and a light in his eye cold and merciless as a rapier thrust, to suggest the self under the make-believe.

After he got his drink, this individual held the bartender in talk for a moment, with the apparent result that when the latter came back to Svenson, his manner was entirely changed.

“Sorry, but it’s the rules of the house,” he apologized. “One of them bits of paper ends all business transactions. Now, ’f I were you, I wouldn’t waste any time gettin’ back to—well, wherever you hail from?”

The advice was fair enough, but the rising inflection at the end was a trick which Svenson did not sense. Incautiously he started to react to the veiled inquiry with the desired information.

“Ay bane from——”

But at that instant, sharp and clear, a memory came to him considerably more disquieting even than the Vigilante warning, a memory which stripped all vagueness from the folly he had been committing the last few days.

“Py Yimminy!” he gasped explanatorily. “Ay bane forgot somet’ing!”

While he spoke, he was spinning on his heavy miner’s boots, and at the last word he made for the door. The crowd of gamblers, spectators and thieves made way for him with unusual alacrity. As he hurried through it, he caught scattered and informative comment:

“Sure makin’ tracks! Well, he’d better.”

“Looks like a dirt miner, though. S’pose they could’ve made a mistake.”

“The Committee don’t make no mistake. If there’s a doubt, they give ’em a trial. Them back-country bandits get themselves up that way.”

“Wonder if he’s one of the Hounds?”

“Naw, or they wouldn’t order him out. They’re after decoratin’ a derrick with them fellows, fast as they catch ’em. It’s only where out-siders drift in, and they haven’t any evidence handy against ’em, that they send out that little fare-you-well sign. Or if a man’s just plain undesirable.”

* * *

SVENSON’S egotism was rather pleasantly tickled at all this, and he might have rather enjoyed the situation, had not the memory of his folly by now been filling him with almost tearful repentance. It came to him that he did not even know how many days it was that he had wandered drunkenly about San Francisco, leaving to his patient partner, Hendricks, the guardianship of the lonely cabin in which was hidden their joint fortune in gold dust and nuggets.

But a series of difficult mental gymnastics, figuring back to the day they had come down from Sacramento, gave him July the twenty-sixth as the date he had last seen his partner. By the Vigilance Committee’s notice, today was the twenty-ninth. Poor, faithful old Hendricks, then, had been standing a continuous watch three days!

Indeed, all the time they had been together, Hendricks had stood more than his share of the watches, had endured more than his share of the things that called for patience. A tall and cadaverous man, seldom smiling, slow-talking and cautious, slow-moving and tireless, he had been a good partner for the usually plodding but sometimes mercurial Svenson. For a year they had hiked and dug, screened and washed dirt, chased glowing prospects, exulted and desponded, endured all the disappointments, hardships and toil of the gold fields together.

They had one thing in common—each a family at home for whom he was working, a wife who was making sacrifices, and consequently a grim necessity to succeed. But

Hendricks had most of the pertinacity. When he came to think about it, Svenson knew that he owed it mainly to his team mate that he had stuck to the traces.

For it had been a long, hard haul. Many times they had thought themselves made, only to have leads peter out, supposed veins turn into pockets. Once they *were* made, and had started for Sacramento, packing their fortunes; but a gang of gold thieves raided their camp one evening when Svenson was stalking a deer, knocked Hendricks over the head, bound and gagged him, and departed with the gold. That was a cruel thing, with both men pining for home! Nor did it help any that, after they had returned to the hills, Hendricks heard of the illness of his wife, and had to make a trip to Sacramento to cash in his dust and send her money, thereby wasting two more weeks. But in six months more, all had come well—they had made the grade again!

They had brought back about two hundred pounds of gold, worth about forty thousand dollars back in the States. Less in San Francisco, of course! Consequently they had followed the custom of other returning miners, rented a cabin on the sand-dunes back of Clay Street, hidden the gold therein, and arranged to stand alternate watches over it until the departure of the sloop *Jamaica* upon which they had secured their passage. An indefinite date that was, for most of the crew had deserted, and their places had to be filled.

A sensible agreement indeed—but then had entered the devil, in the shape of human weakness. Svenson's weakness, of course.

Details are far from necessary. At first, Svenson stood watch with a bottle on his hip; but very soon the world opened up so marvelously that he forgot to stand watch at all. Now he groaned inwardly, trying to recall the last three days, but succeeding only as to hectic patches. More hectic, he supposed, were the periods forgotten.

Coming through the swinging door of the Eldorado out upon Portsmouth Square, Svenson discovered with unreasonable surprize that it seemed to be late evening.

Here and there about the bedizened square, decoy lamps flared through a thick white mist, whose touch was chill to Svenson's heated face. The air quivered with the jarring rivalry of half a dozen rival orchestras. Around the square, and in and out of the drinking and gaming places, drifted flotsam and jetsam from more than the seven seas—gamblers, miners and thieves; "Sydney coves" with faces pale as the mist, swarthy Chilenos, dandified Mexicans with broad red sashes and gleaming shirt-fronts, a sprinkling of female frailty. Drunken men, sober men, men broken from the mines, men wild with sudden first wealth, and indeed all manner of men save stay-at-homes were there, drawn by the lust of gold—a ferment from which strange spawn was just now being cast up.

One of the signs of that ferment was the terse warning which Svenson had received, and which he had now shoved into the pocket of his violently-colored woolen shirt.

Another sign was that the grim gray little man who had studied Svenson at the bar, had now followed him through the door of the Eldorado, and was following him still as he crossed the plaza to the west.

Here was a dark entrance, barred doors—a breeding place of outlawry closed for keeps by order of the Vigilance Committee. There, at the corner of Kearney, a frame building was going up where had stood the Headquarters tent of the lawless order of Hounds. In various places, groups of sinister-faced men gathered and talked in undertones. Everywhere was a tense and quiet wariness, as if the whole quarter walked with hands near holsters and eyes shooting glances sidewise, watchful and expectant of trouble.

Svenson hardly noticed these things, however. He felt sick and tired. He realized that he must have been "tapering off" for a long time or he would not have been sobered so quickly. The cause of this tapering off he discovered in an almost empty gold-pouch.

Seeking solace for all the unpleasant things that had come to him, he felt in his pocket for his year-old pipe. He had done that fully fifty times during the last three days, only to realize he had left the pipe in his cabin. Again he tried smoking an imported cigar, and again threw it away in disgust. At least, he would soon have a real smoke!

A short block from the plaza, Svenson entered Dupont, then up Dupont between rows of new flimsy, frame buildings to the tented wickedness of New Chili. Ahead of him, Telegraph Hill, rimmed about by Sydney Town, loomed up in the fog; but he turned to the west on Union Street, and then at Mason entered the trail to the Presidio.

The soberer he grew, the more grievous appeared his broken compact with Hendricks. Also, the more alarming appeared the warning he had received from the Vigilantes. Even to the back-country, the fame of that organization had penetrated. It was no mob. It was really a revolt of the soberer and permanent citizens of San Francisco against the rule of a drifting mob, of the criminal Order of Hounds, and of a city government which was the creature of the Hounds.

Though it was not infallible, it at least tried hard to be just; but under the circumstances, it must judge swiftly and execute its judgments more swiftly still. Nor did it palter with disobedience. Whatever it had against Svenson, he knew that San Francisco would be very unsafe for him twenty-four hours from now.

"Ay tank Hendricks—he know what to do," he thought. "Ay bane glad Ay got Hendricks to tell me."

Visions of summary deportations, imprisonment, even hanging, danced before him in the mist; and indeeed, visions of every conceivable catastrophe except that toward the evidence of which he was approaching. Nor did the least suspicion of the truth come to him even when he saw that the window of the cabin was dark.

"Poor ol' Hendricks—gotta sleep some'a da tame. Ay take da watch now. Ay let Hendricks go chase himself till da *Jamaica* sail, if he can fix da —— Committee up so it let me stay."

He rapped on the door, apology and repentance in the very tapping of his muscles. Then louder and more characteristically he rapped. Louder still, and with dawning fear. Then with a growl under his breath, and the thought in his mind that he would find Hendricks murdered on his double watch, he drew back and flung his great weight against the door. The lock fastening broke. Svenson scratched a match and looked around the vacant room. Then he closed the door behind him, scratched another match, and lighted a candle which stood on the little red-wood table. His fingers trembled a little.

His whole great body was tense, but incredulity still persisted on his face. Nevertheless, it was with an increasing hurry in his movements that he seized a chair, braced it hard against the door, then turned and with three strides reached the further corner of the room. Kneeling, he inserted horny finger-nails into an inconspicuous crack in the floor. A short piece of plank came up. Into the hole thus made, Svenson extended his forearm. It encountered only vacancy. The gold was gone.

THE discovery sent Svenson swiftly to his feet, where he stood staring around like an angry and bewildered lion. Not yet could he comprehend the fact that his partner must have taken the gold. But the window was barred and the door had been locked—not so would robbers have left it! The floor was freshly swept, bunks made up neatly, furniture in its usual place, certainly no sign of either a search or a struggle.

Conviction came slowly. His striking muscles tensed. He thought of that curious robbery in the hills six months before, when he had found Hendricks gagged and bound and with a wound on his head. A trick, of course. And the subsequent trip to Sacramento had been for the purpose of shipping the gold. Hendricks, his partner, was a crook.

Nevertheless, holding hard to hope, Svenson hurriedly started to search everywhere, under the dishes, under the table-legs, above the door, for some note which Hendricks might have left for him. But there was none.

On a ledge he discovered his tobacco-pouch and his year-old, full-flavored pipe. He was hardly conscious of taking them down, of starting to open the pouch. When he heard a knock on the door, he shoved both hastily in his pocket, and strode across the room, full of a Berserker rage. With his foot he sent the chair flying. Savagely he jerked open the broken door.

The candle stood so close to the door that Svenson could see his visitor distinctly—a small gray man who leaned upon a cane and whose eyes swept from the broken lock to Svenson's face with a sharp, quick glance.

"Mr. Svenson? Mr. Nels Svenson?" he asked politely.

Svenson, vaguely remembering the man, but thinking of little save his loss, snarled an affirmative.

"My name is Duart," said the stranger smoothly. "James Duart. Proprietor of the Commercial Auction House, and—May I come in?"

Something in the man's tones roused Svenson's ire still further. Was this man spying on him?

"Come in if you like?" he said gruffly, stepping back.

The man entered, and his first words seemed to confirm Svenson's suspicion, as well as to hint a certain suspicion of the stranger's.

"You're losin' no time collectin' a grub stake to travel on. Well, that's right, though of course you have twenty-three hours left. The Committee——"

"Say! Bane you one of dem?" growled Svenson, tightening his fists.

The other smiled easily, watching Svenson closely and playing with his cane, the point of it between them.

"Hardly, my friend. Fact is, the only reason the Committee doesn't hand me one of those friendly invitations to move is because they hope to hang me. Which, to be absolutely frank, is a very praiseworthy ambition on their part, but one which I hope to disappoint."

Svenson, without understanding all of Duart's words, got the gist of his meaning.

"Dat so? Well, w'at t'——s dat got to do wit' me?"

Duart's smile grew slightly dangerous.

"You're a clever lad, Svenson, though this—entrance wasn't clever," with a glance at the broken lock. "I admire your manner—so like that of an honest miner. But between friends, masks off—what d'ye say? We must help each other these days—hang together or separately, and that's a literal fact. Here goes my mask, seeing that yours was removed in the El Dorado. Master of the Hounds, at your service. Are you one of us?"

Swiftly he clasped Svenson's great hand, gripping and pressing it in a peculiar way. Then he dropped it disappointedly.

"No! Going it on your own?" he said softly. "Well, it doesn't matter. Fact is, the Hounds are shot to pieces. Only about twenty of us left in San Francisco, and most of us in hiding, at that. And a year ago we had the city under our thumbs. All things pass and we're passing too—out of San Francisco, anyway, only—" he smiled—"those that are left are figuring on softening our grief by taking with us about a hundred thousand in gold apiece."

"A hundred t'ousand!"

"That's what I said."

"An' w'at for are you tellin' me?"

"Well, you're ordered out—maybe you've grief of your own to soften. In which case you might like to be one of us."

Involuntarily, Svenson glanced toward the rifled cache. Grief, eh! That was grief. And Hendricks! Was there any such thing as honor in the world? And he was absolutely broke, after a year's work. He had not enough left to buy a mining outfit.

When he brought his narrowing eyes back to Duart, avid, crafty lines had begun to appear about them.

"Ay tank d'ats a big lead to give to a stranger."

"Pshaw, you're no stranger—introduced and recommended by the Vigilance Committee. Besides, I need your help in working the lead. Are you on?"

"Ay tank it's a blind lead, though. How Ay know——"

"You'll know in an hour, if you agree to go in with us. And before morning you'll be out of San Francisco with the hundred thousand. Are you on?"

On a ledge stood a half-emptied whisky bottle, from which Svenson had solaced himself during his latter watches over his hard-earned gold. He took it, offered it to Duart, then drank. Into the drink, peculiarly enough, the poisonous thought of his partner's treachery seemed to enter, sickening him.

"All right. Ay bane on," he decided.

"Sure you would be," said Duart, rising promptly. "Now come with me—but better not, at that. Meet me on the corner of California and Kearney. You'll see a joint there that's been closed by the Vigilantes. Meet me in front of that. You've a watch? Good! Start in five minutes. I'll just go on ahead of you. We're both too well known, Svenson, to be seen together."

Left alone, Svenson sat down with the bottle and drained it. The whisky dispelled a logginess that had been coming over him. Under its influence, his rage at Hendricks increased to the point of torture. He thought of many epithets for Hendricks, but not one was vile enough to suit the case. He menaced the air with his fist, and once struck the wall of the cabin so hard that his knuckles bled.

He looked at his watch. The five minutes were more than passed. Leaving the cabin door unfastened, he started to return down town. This time, a vague bravado sent him straight down Union to Kearney, and thence southward to his destination. That way, he passed through the heart of San Francisco's worst district, where Sydney Town merged with New Chili, where the crooks of two hemispheres met.

The streets were narrow, muddy, and almost deserted. A year before, it had been a profitable plucking-place; but the crooks had mixed too many murders with their thievery, and now they were forced to seek their prey up-town. None but the drunkest of the miners could now be enticed to this section. But here the thieves themselves lived, and plotted crime, and watched for strays. Through the lampless streets, upon which here and there some canvas wall shed a ruddy glow, men and women skulked, silently, shadowy, looking behind them.

Svenson, himself reckless to the point of murder, laughed when he found himself watched and followed, first by one man, then by three. Ahead of him, he saw a sinister-looking group waiting on a dark corner, and he realized, all at once, that they intended to rob him. As he neared them, their talk fell to whispers, then to silence. They drew back as if to let him pass.

"Da big one iss Hendricks," thought Svenson, crazily. "Ay will gif him da gun, den da knife, den da boots. Or maybe Ay will gif him da hand an' say, 'See, Ay bane one of you.' And den——"

SUDDENLY there came the tolling of a bell. It was a loud, clangorous alarm that drew reverberations even from the wooden shells which lined the streets. It was, Svenson knew, the sign for the meeting of the Vigilantes. Without premeditation, he flung back his head and emitted a challenging laugh. But an uneasy stirring, like a collective shiver, passed over the group ahead of him. Sudden fear, inspired by the Vigilante signal, paralyzed their intentions toward Svenson. Deliberately he loitered when he came in front of them, but they only lowered their tones to whispers.

Svenson was inspired to stop and address them.

"Ay bane one of you," he declaimed. "Tonight Ay bane goin' steal one hundred t'ousand dollars. Da Master of Hounds —— he say it. Da Vigilance Committee say to me, get out. Mine partner steal me mine twenty t'ousand wort' uv dust. So Ay get out, an'——"

Imperceptibly the group dissolved, its constituent parts vanishing into the darkness. Svenson went on, rather saddened by the desertion. The continued clangor of the bell annoyed his ears. In a few minutes, however, it ceased.

At California and Kearney, Svenson found Duart waiting.

This was the southern limit of the city, save for Happy Valley across Market Street. Here were plainly new wholesale and import houses, always lonely after nightfall. Now, after midnight, there seemed no passer-by at all.

Two oil lamps on opposite corners struggled unsuccessfully to dispel the darkness. They succeeded, however, in illumining their immediate surroundings, and in making a path through the mist to the observer's eyes. One of them stood in front of the new Custom House, the other in front of an apparently vacant one-story building with "Alhambra" in faded paint across its front.

Below that sign was another, more freshly painted, which reminded Svenson that Duart had first introduced himself as, "Proprietor of the Commercial Auction House." Here was the same firm name again, with the added word, "Warehouse."

Svenson was not surprized when Duart led him across the street toward that building.

"Just for purposes of introduction," said Duart, "let me have that bid the Vigilance Committee sent you."

Svenson gave it to him.

When they reached the door, Duart unlocked it. The interior of the warehouse, after the door was closed behind them, was pitch dark. Duart took Svenson by the hand and led him down a crooked aisle flanked by many piles of packing-cases—most of which, Svenson judged by the feel of them, were empty—to the rear of the room. Then he reached down to the floor and raised a trap-door, which revealed a square of light. A set of steps led vertically down into a small cellar.

Down these, Duart climbed, Svenson following him.

When they got down into the cellar, Svenson found that it was rather overpopulated for its size. Twenty men, more or less, had been sprawling about on the floor, or sitting on wooden packing-cases. All were now on their feet, and were turning truculent and suspicious eyes upon Svenson. Profanely expressed inquiries and ejaculations filled the air. In language rich with explosives, they demanded to know who Svenson was, and what Duart meant by bringing him there tonight.

Svenson felt disgust. He spat on the earthen floor as he found himself surrounded by the under-sized, pale-faced, slack-featured crew—criminal riff-raff from Sydney, typical Apaches from Paris, fugitive cutthroats from the Eastern cities. Two years before, he knew, locks had not been needed in California. Then these had come——

There was a quivering in his muscles. Surlily he folded his arms to restrain them as the men passed around the printed notice of the Vigilance Committee, his credential to their fellowship.

Duart drew a little behind Svenson.

"You all know I was looking for another man—a good man," he explained, with a peculiar note in his voice. "Well, here he is. I wouldn't be surprized if he was worth any six of us for what's wanted most tonight. Beef, to manage those heavy cases. Just beef!"

Toward the end, his tone was so polite and casual that Svenson took no offense at the words. Nor did Svenson see that Duart drew the edge of his hand across his throat at an appropriate moment—a sign which satisfactorily explained much to the others. None of them was willing further to divide the loot.

"Naturally, I haven't told Svenson here what the plan is, yet," continued Duart. "But that's quickly done. Here's a bit of work that's kept us busy for a month—give us a hand here."

One of his confederates helped him to shift a packing-case which stood against the inner-wall of the cellar. This revealed the open mouth of a tunnel, about five feet high and nearly as wide.

"There we are," said Duart. "I bet you already know what's at the other end of that tunnel—the custom house brick vault. Myers here helped put it in, so we all know 'twas a good job, except maybe on this side. Upward of two million in gold inside it. Watchmen on floor above—they won't bother us.

"Gold in wooden cases. Now, in a shed around the corner we've got a couple of horses hitched to a prairie schooner. And at the California Street wharf is the good ship *Jamaica*, all coaled and due to sail tomorrow. What's the matter, Svenson?"

"Not'ing," grunted Svenson.

But he had started. So the *Jamaica* upon which he and Hendricks had taken passage, was to sail in the morning, and he had known nothing about it. Well, what did it matter now? Certainly Hendricks would not dare sail on her. And he could not, unless as one of this crew of rascals.

"Well, that's the situation," continued Duart, "except that there's the Vigilance Committee and other law-abiding citizens to be looked after.

"Now, we'll handle them a little bit different this time than we ever have before. They're used to having us set fires and then loot the burning sections. Tonight we'll draw them off by firing the section we don't intend to loot—everything west of Kearney. Just so we won't get mixed up, let's go over the plans again. Joe, what are you going to do?"

"Go to the Veranda Saloon, hide in the basement, and when I get the signal, light the fuse that'll blow up the place and fire it. Then I beat it to the wharf."

"And you, 'Blackie' Ford?"

"Hide under the California Warehouse and do the same."

"And you, Stewart?"

"Blow hup the —— 'ospital," said one of the men from Sydney, "hand the best job hof hall for the hexcitement hit'll cause."

"And you?" to the man standing next to Stewart.

Twelve of the men assigned to burn the city recited their different stations. Then Duart continued:

"The rest of us, of course, empty the vault. After the gold is all up through that trap-door, 'Charley-from-the-country,' here, will slide out and blow up the El Dorado. That's the signal for the firebrands, and in ten minutes everything above Kearney'll be blazing. We'll wait a bit, till the whole population gets up that way. Then Jimmy here will kite out and get the prairie schooner, and we'll load the gold.

"Then to California Street wharf. Nobody'll notice a prairie schooner, and nobody can see us inside it. Most of the crew of the *Jamaica* will probably be ashore by then, helping fight the fires—another reason for setting them. Those that are on board will soon be finished. No fighting and no noise if we can help it—and nobody left to tell tales, either. By the time we get the gold on board, the rest of you should be there, and we're off to a port of division that I'll tell you about later. D'ye all understand, now?"

The men nodded, grunted and grinned their understanding. Svenson frowned unconsciously as he stared around at their faces.

"All right. Now you 'firebrands' better get started. And remember, all of you, this is a swinging job in itself, and they can't swing any one of you more than once. Don't be afraid of wasting bullets. You've got a —— sight more of them than you have of necks. And don't let yourself be taken prisoner, because it won't do any good."

The "firebrands" started filing up the ladder, a skulking crew, fit men for their jobs. Abstractedly, Svenson turned his attention to those who remained behind. Automatically, as he studied them, he felt in his pocket for tobacco and pipe.

Charley-from-the-country was a decent looking man, save for his eyes, which were the eyes of a wolf. Myers was evidently a mechanic who had been ruined and poisoned by drink. The other five were rats. Svenson felt strangely lonely as he rammed some tobacco into the bowl of his pipe—or started to—and found it was full of paper.

"All right. Let's go," said Duart.

He turned toward the mouth of the tunnel, and the other seven followed his example, turning their backs upon Svenson. Hurriedly he fished out the paper, and filled and lit his pipe, glancing swiftly around the cellar as he did so.

"Got some water?" demanded Svenson suddenly. "—— if Ay can work wit'out water."

For a moment no one replied, but in the eyes of the eight men, as they glanced swiftly toward him, was something very unpleasant. Something that made Svenson shiver without knowing why. Then Duart laughed softly and pointed to the tin bucket and dipper which Svenson had already perceived in a corner.

"Luckily," he said, "there's some there."

Svenson went over and drank long and deeply, smoothing the crumpled paper out against his shirt-front and the palm of his left hand, then leveling his palm, and reading the paper as he slowly reached for another drink.

When he turned away, the paper was in his trousers pocket. He glanced toward the adder and the trap-door in the ceiling, wondering if he could get through it before he was shot. But Duart's eyes were upon him, watchfully.

"All right!" said Duart.

Svenson crossed the floor toward the others. Charly-from-the-country stooped and entered the tunnel, and others followed, some not needing to stoop. When Svenson started to go in, Duart stopped him.

"You'd clog the works," he said, "with that body of yours. Your job's out here."

Two others of the gang, besides Duart and Svenson, remained outside. Presently a dim light came from the mouth of the tunnel, as if a candle had been lighted somewhere along its length.

No sound came from the men, and Svenson was presently surprized to see a small, metal-bound case emerge from the mouth of the tunnel, and roll over on its side, propelled by a pair of hands which immediately disappeared. It was clear to him, then, that the others had formed a line reaching into the vault, and were rolling the gold out through the tunnel from man to man.

"You fellows," said Duart to the two Hounds who had stayed in the cellar, "get up above and move the gold to the door. And you, Svenson—now you see why I let you in at the last minute. A quick way to make a hundred thousand, eh, passing up the gold?"

A quick way, indeed, and for Svenson, a not particularly difficult way. Though the case of gold weighed several hundred pounds, he swung it quite easily over his head, thrust it through the trap door, and shifted it sidewise noiselessly upon the floor above. But to the Hounds, it would have been a different matter. Three or four would have been required to each case—perhaps ropes or other mechanical aid. It would have been awkward. Dangerous, too, for if a case ever fell, the crash would surely be heard by the watchmen. Svenson understood plainly why his keg-lifting stunts had won for him Duart's offer.

Svenson wondered what would happen if *he* dropped a case. Duart kept quite close to him, with the point of his slender cane continually tapping the earth between them.

When Svenson passed up the next case, he noticed that the room above was now fairly well lighted. Presumably the two men had lighted candles and stuck them about, to enable them to pick their way noiselessly between the piles of packing-cases, to the door.

Case followed case, a fortune in each. Virgin gold, unspent and unspoiled, fresh from the crucible of Nature, with all its potentialities before it. Such gold as Svenson had toiled and travailed for, sweated and slaved, turned himself into a cart-horse and a digging-machine. It might have been pig-iron, by the way he handled the cases. His mind was on something else now.

Case followed case, for considerably more than an hour. Svenson realized that it would have taken several hours, had it not been for his lifting power—another reason that Duart had picked him out.

But at last it seemed that an end was coming to the work. The men began to emerge from the tunnel. Charley-from-the-country came out.

"You better run out now, Charley," said Duart, "and start the ball going. We'll leave the old town frizzling, anyway. In Vigilante grease, I hope."

Charley-from-the-country went to the foot of the ladder, started to climb up it. Svenson was putting the last of the cases through the opening in the floor above. He felt the two Hounds take it from his hands, stagger away with it. Swiftly he gripped the floor on opposite sides of the opening, and pulled himself upward with a mad muscular convulsion. With a swing of his foot, he kicked Charley-from-the-country down from the ladder.

Five terrifically angry exclamations sounded behind him. Fear held the Hounds' voices low, however, and they were silenced by a swift command from Duart.

"Sh-h! Be still! Don't shoot!"

WHILE he spoke, Duart must have been acting, for just as Svenson jerked his legs through the opening, he felt his left leg lanced clear through just above his miner's boot. It was a narrow chance that he was not pinned to the wood. He did not look back as he tore his leg away from the blade, but he knew it was Duart that had so nearly got him.

"That —— 'Limpy' "! he thought. "Wonder how that Limpy did it."

Then he leaped for the front of the storeroom, cluttered the whole length of it with packing cases in which nothing was packed, wherewith Duart had masked his purpose in renting the place.

As he reached them, the two Hounds dropped the case of gold and whirled to meet him. To meet, it must have seemed to them, a human cyclone, for they were picked up each by an enormous hand and flung bodily sidewise, to come down half-stunned and sprawling upon the floor. They had not got to their feet again by the time that Svenson, zigzagging between piles of empty boxes higher than his head, had reached and leaped over a barrier of boxes which were by no means empty—boxes of Midas wealth—arranged in a semicircle before the door.

Them he disregarded, however. It was the door that interested him; he seized the latch, lifted it and pulled hard, frantically, with all his might. Then he threw himself against the door. It did not even quiver. It seemed to have been heavily reinforced for just such an attack. And they were two stout spring-locks with which the door was fastened. He looked around at the windows—four of them, boarded over.

The place might have been a fortress, but for him it was a trap, with the Hounds within who would soon be at his throat, the Vigilantes and citizenry outside, and the evidence of crime all around.

He heard some of the Hounds stirring about. He turned, noting well as he did so the positions of the three candles on ledges along the wall to his right. Peering through a crevice in the upper tier of his Midas barricade, he saw Duart stealing forward through the clutter of boxes, swiftly, furtively, with no limp at all.

A hot hatred, not altogether reasoned filled Svenson's throat. He had his revolver in his hand, and swiftly flung it forward. Somehow, he felt as if he were holding the bead on a serpent, but he did not fire. Instead, he grunted gutturally—

"You keep away, you stabber."

"D'you want to swing?" snarled Duart, leaping sidewise behind some boxes. "—— you, if you want to swing, start something."

Svenson shivered. Certainly he had no desire to hang, and certainly he knew well that if they were all caught here together, he would live no longer than the Hounds.

Possibly not as long, for Duart had a clever tongue to plead his case, money, and probably friends, and Svenson had none of these. Yet he did not think it was fear that made him shiver.

Now he could see none of his enemies, but it seemed to him that he could hear them all. They were stirring about, here, there and everywhere, all over the rear part of the room. There was something very business-like and deadly about these sounds, these preparations—which they must be—for concerted assassination. They suggested that a definite plan had already been formed. Svenson shivered again, felt of his blood-soaked trousers below the knee, and whispered to himself:

"It's dat—Limpy dat's lost his limp. Ay wonder if he's done for me."

Aloud he said—

"Ay don't tank Ay swing."

Then the chill that had come over him passed into a strange flush, and he knew that something was wrong with him.

"How can you help it?" asked Duart more amiably. "You're in this worse than we are, with that warning and all. If we're caught you hang, sure. But, ——! Why should we be caught? Why should you want to queer the game? What's the matter with you, anyway?"

"Ay find out something," grunted Svenson sullenly.

Duart, knowing nothing of the discovery Svenson had made when he started to fill his pipe, naturally thought he had somehow surmised the deadly intentions of the gang concerning him. That would explain his attempt to escape.

"Maybe you think you found out something," he replied. "I don't know what you mean. We meant to play square with you, if that's it."

"Maybeso," replied Svenson, imperturbably. "Now you say dat, Ay tank maybeso you didn't. But dat ain't w'at Ay found out. Ay tank——"

His voice died on the word. Suddenly it seemed to him that the pile of packing-boxes directly in front of the opening through which he was peering was considerably closer to him.

He watched it a breathless moment. It was surely moving. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, it was creeping across the floor toward him. Shifting his position a little, he saw that others had also moved closer. Now the plan of the Hounds was clear to him. Concealed behind those empty cases, they were working in to get him within reach of their knives while Duart talked to him.

"Sa-ay, you keep away!"

Something of fear was now in Svenson's voice, but it was not altogether fear of the knives. Partly it was caused by the nausea at the pit of his stomach, and the queer numbness that was working up and down his leg from the place he was wounded.

Duart chuckled.

"Keep away, ——!" now with a queer, avid note in his voice. "Why, it's all the same to us as killing a rat. Only we don't want a fuss. If you give in now, you can still have your hundred thousand and stay behind. You can take one of these cases and stay here till we leave and then tote it any place you like. And—well, I'll show you how to take care of yourself. You're going to die now, you know, from that leg."

The barricades of packing-cases kept coming on, more swiftly now that concealment was ended. Svenson saw how it was. He was poisoned and would die anyway, only Duart did not want to wait for the poison to work. Also, the poison might be such as brought on convulsions, with consequent noise. But eight knives buried deep in his body would kill him quickly enough. Svenson saw that the packing-cases would all reach him at about the same moment. Suddenly he reached down, picked up one of the cases of gold, and hurled it straight at the nearest moving barricade. It struck squarely and sent the boxes flying—all but the bottom one—flying and crashing down upon the floor. There was a splintering of wood as the heavy case of gold smashed one of the empty boxes.

Duart's infuriated voice rose from somewhere further back in the room:

"—— you! Spoiled everything. Now, by ——, you pay."

A revolver crashed from his direction. A bullet sent fragments of wood into Svenson's face. Svenson threw himself to the right, where he had a better range for his revolver. Once, twice, three times, he fired. One candle fell from the ledge. The lights of the others were fanned out by the singing bullets.

In the pitch dark, he launched himself forward in Duart's direction. Something sang through the air near him, like the lash of a whip. Svenson reached out blindly. His hand closed on Duart's cane. He wrenched it away, reversed it—knowing now whence had come his wound—and thrust out toward where Duart had been. Thin air alone met the venomous sword-cane, and Svenson reeled forward, over-balanced.

With his hands he smashed the cane and flung it away, wishing it were Duart's body. From his right a revolver spat fire at him, and he heard the hiss of the bullet. He whirled to fire toward the flash. Then he leaped—somewhere—and went asprawl in a wreckage of crates and boxes.

Near him, it seemed that two men struck at each other, and cursed as they recognized their mistake. Svenson grimaced wildly. He lifted a whole pile of packing cases, and flung them toward the voices. A frantic scrambling followed. That gave him an idea. He thrust his revolver into its holster, and began to lay about him with packing cases.

It made a noise like a battle, and it was noise that the Hounds dreaded. Nor, this way, did Svenson present himself as a target. Flying boxes and fragments of boxes were the only signs of him, and they were here, there, and everywhere. From time to time he yelled, but the demoniac sound was echoed and reechoed from every angle, so that a dozen men seemed yelling.

Svenson felt some one stir at his feet. He reached down swiftly for the other's throat, and knew by the high soft collar that it was Duart. He swung Duart up by throat and thigh and whirled him over his head. He was about to pitch him away when he stopped, noticing the stillness of the place.

Indeed, it seemed absolutely silent, now that Svenson himself had paused, nor was the room as dark as it had been. In what Svenson judged to be the direction of the door, the blackness was broken by a ghostly gray. The door was open, then, and all of the Hounds that could walk had gone—perhaps all but Duart, here.

And Duart seemed such a weak, broken thing! And waiting for Svenson down there on the *Jamaica*, only a few blocks away——

Suddenly Svenson laughed. There was contentment in that laugh, and contempt for Duart, and the unsteadiness of physical weakness and pain. He staggered a little as he lowered Duart and turned toward the door.

Then he stopped and sniffed the air—there was smoke in it! He listened to the sound of a sharp crackling. He turned, remembering the fallen candle, and beheld flames creeping up, licking up, through a heap of broken boxes and splintered wood that slanted more than man-high against the rear wall of the room.

Svenson's slow brains were enfevered now, racing as fast as his heated blood. He remembered Duart's instructions to the Hounds who had departed an hour before, remembered that the El Dorado was only a few blocks away, and realized that there would be little difference in appearance between the burning of that tinder pile and this. And it was to burn the El Dorado that Charley-from-the-country had been ordered! It was for that signal the incendiaries were waiting——

Already Svenson had dropped Duart to the floor and leaped toward the crackling heap with bottom of twisting flames.

With hands that he now discovered were torn and bleeding, he plucked away the splintered wood. It was many feet deep here where the flames were brightest, and it came away by inches. Faster than that the flames worked, curling up to meet Svenson. Desperately now he thrust his arms in to the elbows, and shoved the stuff aside. Furiously he worked to come to grips with the fire.

He reached it at last. His woolen shirt was off, and with it he was smothering the fire, whipping it out. With his heavy boots he leaped upon the blazing boards, smashing them, crushing them down. But the heat reached his feet, and the flames reached his hands and his arms. He cursed like a madman—cursed the fire, Duart, the gold, the Hounds who had fled, and with particular fury the Hounds who were waiting for the blowing up and burning of the El Dorado to set all the city ablaze. Once he even cursed his partner Hendricks, whose act, after all, had brought him to this pass, but he choked that curse off in mid-utterance.

He grew weak and dizzy. The smoke strangled him and his heart throbbed painfully. Blood dripped from the wound in his leg down upon the fire. Blood ran from other wounds, too, but that was the troublesome one. Poisoned, it was!

After awhile he took his knife and cut open the leg of his trousers; and then, by the light of the few brands that still blazed, he laid open the wound along all its length. He let the blood run a little longer from this fresh cut, then took one of the glowing brands and held it against the raw flesh, burning into it, cauterizing it in backwoods fashion, the while he set his teeth. Though much had happened, only a few minutes had actually passed since he had been wounded, and he hoped the burning would do some good. And then, too, he had been bleeding steadily, ever since!

After he had stamped the fire completely out, he turned to find Duart, and found instead that he had gone. Then Svenson went out of the door, and ran down toward California Street wharf. It was time. Svenson realized dully how fortunate it had been for him that this was the very edge of the growing city, where there were no passers-by at night. Fortunate, too, that the fracas had lasted so short a time, and that the streets were mostly dark.

As it was, the people that had been attracted by the noise were still at a little distance. Men came running down Kearney, the bewildered watchmen were stirring around the door of the Custom House, and the Monumental bell was ringing. That last told that the Vigilantes were gathering. They would take charge of the gold, then; and certainly nothing more would be heard from the Hounds or Hound Master that night.

Svenson reached the *Jamaica.* The gangway was up, but he leaped the interval, called for Hendricks, and fell spent upon the deck at the watchman's feet. And when they found in his pocket the note signed by Hendricks, which Svenson had found in his pipe—but all that doesn't matter.

WHAT mattered to Svenson, after he found himself fixed up in his berth and alive, was—

"Why da' blankety-blank-blank——?"

"You see," explained Hendricks, "I couldn't stay in the cabin any longer, account of findin' it was bein' watched. Somebody's got scent of us havin' gold. Besides, I declare I got to needin' sleep. So when I finds our quarters on the *Jamaica* open, I just moves in, and brings the gold. Thinks I, when you hear she's sailin', you're most as liable to go to her as back to the cabin.

"An' if you come here, I'm here, an' if you go to the cabin, you'll get my note, explainin' things. So you'd be sure to get it, I left it in the first thing you'd hit for, when you got back to the cabin, your darn old pipe. An' so nobody else would get it, of course. An' you admit you'd have got it all right, only just then Duart came in. An' then your natural disposition got a chance for a few more didoes."

"Yah, Ay guess. Ay bane da big fool all 'long," admitted Svenson. "But Ay can't see yet w'y da Vigilance Committee got so down on me. Ay was only one —— big trunk!"

Hendricks got up and squinted through the port hole.

"Twenty-four hours they gave you to get out in," he said. "Well, the old sloop's gettin' under way. You'll make it all right."

Grinning a little, he sat down again.

"I didn't tell you I happened to know the Chairman of the Vigilance Committee. From my own home town, and a fine chap. One mornin' I took an hour off from watchin' the gold, and went down to see him."

Svenson stared up at him with dawning suspicion.

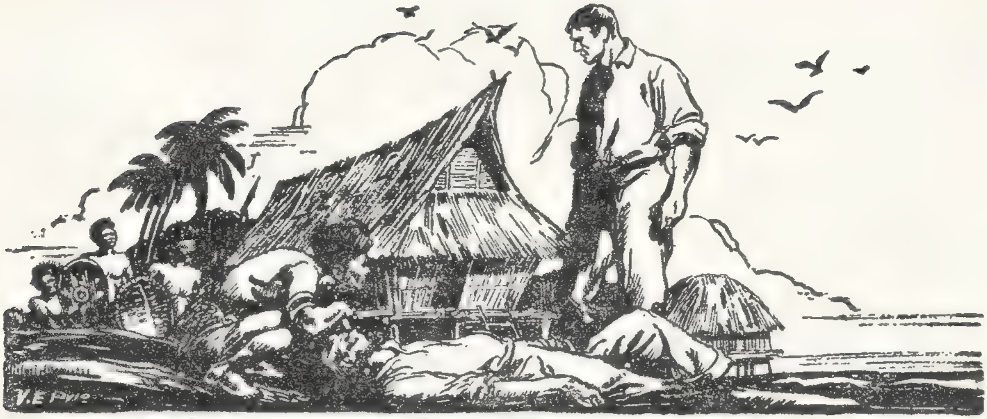
"W'ats dat got to do wit' it?" he demanded.

"Nothing much, only—now, remember all's well that ends well! And kindly hold your horses! *I* couldn't get out to look for you, could I? And somebody had to find you and bring you to your senses before the *Jamaica* sailed. And you admit that little deputation of Vigilantes turned both tricks."

Svenson's ponderous frame quivered with several emotions, and he tried to sit up.

"——! You bane mean py —— dat you told da Committee——"

"Hush, hush!" soothed Hendricks. "You'll wake the sea-gulls. I drew it mild —there wasn't any danger of 'em hangin' you. Only that you were dog-gone undesirable, that's all; and you couldn't blame me for feelin' just then that I was tellin' 'em the truth. After you'd run out on me three days."



Marty's Bones

A Complete Novelette by J. D. NEWSOM

Author of "When the Gods Failed," "The Come-Back," etc.

I MET him in the Botanical Gardens at Sydney one hot evening in October. We shared the same bench because all the other benches were occupied by self-absorbed couples of opposite sexes only too obviously desiring solitude and elbow-room. Our bench was exposed to the harsh glare of an arc light and in no great demand, so we had it to ourselves, I at one end and he at the other. I was down-wind, and his breath, drifting across the intervening four feet, lost nothing of its pungency in transit.

I thought he was asleep and for want of something better to do looked him over out of the corner of my eye. He was short, and fairly clean even though his coat was in rags and his dusty toes projected through holes in his broken-down shoes. He wore no collar; his neck was encircled by a red muffler of the type worn in certain Anglo-Saxon communities by those engaged in unskilled labor. The dejected brim of a greasy felt hat, once brown, I should say, hid his eyes, but his nose, mouth and chin thrown into sharp relief by the brilliant light overhead were clean cut though not particularly strong.

He sat there, slumped down, with the nape of his neck resting on the back of the bench and exhaled stale fumes, creating in that flower-scented garden an atmosphere reminiscent of basement saloons at six o'clock in the morning. His type is quite common and of little interest, so after five minutes difficult breathing I decided to move on to another bench even at the risk of incurring some enraptured couple's displeasure.

As I stirred he stirred. He rolled his head toward me and remarked somberly—

"That's a —— of a thing, ain't it?"

I thought he might be seeing spiders the size of great Danes, and he might be dangerous, so I answered guardedly—

"Where is it, this —— of a thing?"

Extracting one hand from his trouser pocket, he pointed a long and very grimy finger toward a marble Discobolus, of heroic dimensions, half-seen behind a bank of shrubbery. The bent head and straining right arm alone stood out white and dazzling against the background of dark sky and stars.

Classic statuary in parks always exasperates me. It smacks so much of the worthy councillor, with a misguided sense of his cultural duty toward the mass of his fellow-citizens, who spends public moneys to obtain badly finished replicas of standard works while contemporary sculptors starve. Out in the open, I imagine, people want to watch the birds in the trees, the ripple of wind-blown grass, the bright colors of

---

"Marty's Bones," copyright, 1924, by J. D. Newsom.

flowers, not scabrous statues on crumbling pedestals.

I wondered whether my neighbor shared my objection to spoon-fed culture, but I could not believe it. I supposed the soft night air and the mysterious shadows had stirred within him some latent fount of cheap emotionalism, which, for want of words, he used oaths to express, so I tried to humor him.

"That is the Discus Thrower," I explained. "It was originally——"

"It's too —— big."

He wriggled his shoulders, scratching them vigorously against the back of the seat.

"Over-sized?" I suggested.

"You said it. It's always the big fellows that get away with the goods. Always the big fellows! That one there—he's all beef, but I'll bet his brains was marble even when he was alive. Throwing plates about! And they build 'em statues! Just because he's the size of a house. Makes me sick, it does."

He leaned over and breathed upon me, full in the face.

"It's the little 'uns like me what does this here world's work. We does the thinking and the planning, and it's the six footers comes along and throws the plates and gets the glory after smashing things up all over the shop."

"He's not throwing a plate," I ventured. "The thing he is holding in his hand is a disc used in athletic——"

"Plate or no plate, he's a big guy and I hate him," declared my neighbor.

"Size doesn't really make much difference," I suggested. "There was Napoleon, quite small, and—" on the spur of the moment, with the exception of the Imperial butcher, I was at a loss for names, so I concluded lamely—"and a score of other leaders."

"You don't know," I was harshly told. "It's the fault of women. They love 'em big. Bigger the better."

The argument did not interest me in the least, but my neighbor was loquacious and I was partially anesthetized by his extraordinarily volatile exhalations. However, I protested.

"Why drag in the women? They're always being blamed for some one else's shortcomings. What have they done to you?"

Too late I realized my error. My *vis a vis* straightened up, took firm hold of the lapel of my white and quite clean coat with a filthy paw and wheezed within an inch of my nose:

"I'll tell you. Gimme a smoke and I'll tell you what they done to me."

I could not resist the appeal. He bit off the end of one of my cigars and settled himself as comfortably as possible on the angular bench, resting one hand on my knee perhaps as a mark of esteem, or, more likely, to keep me from slinking away.

His speech I can not reproduce with all its virile eloquence. He used oaths with the same fine discrimination Oscar Wilde and his contemporaries devoted to their search for the *"mot juste;"* he misused his mother-tongue with masterly ease. I can not hope to emulate him for my vocabulary is not sufficiently colorful and my memory none too accurate.

After blowing whorls of tobacco smoke into the still night air, he began:

BEING a bum ain't always been my job. Not much. Once I owned a schooner, the *Varatua,* and a fine boat she was at that. Pearler? No, sir! Trading, all the way from New Brunswick down to the Isle of Pines. Even if I do say so, things was going good. It was "Mister Ballard" this, and "Mister Ballard" that, in those days, and the Kanakas they ate out of my hand. They traded their copra for matches and cheap cloths, and you bet I was giving nothing away. Down there on George Street the bank manager used to come sashaying out to meet me when I blew in with my pile once every so often. Say, I was going fine.

And I kep' away from the bright lights. Steady, I was, and cold sober, for I was fixing things up pretty with old man Cruikshank's daughter, Lizzy. Cruikshank had a place on Ambrym in the Hebrides. He was crazy as a loon, him and his brother, too, what helped him, but his daughter she was a peach. Lizzy! She had hair the color of Baccardi with the sun shining through the glass, and eyes— Oh, well, you know what I mean.

Cruikshank ran a three-room hotel full of cockroaches, and Lizzy did the cooking. Nobody stopped there much save me. When the hurricane season came around I'd go to Ambrym and stay there three-four weeks. Holiday. Cruikshank and his brother, Marty, used to sit on the screened veranda drinking rum and condensed milk and get soused and fight like —— all over the place. Me and Liz sat out back looking at the —— big hills and the sunsets and the jungle beyond the cotton fields. We'd hold hands most of the time when we wasn't taking wangs at the malaria mosquitoes and the sand flies.

And when I had five hundred pounds in the bank on George Street, I says to Lizzy—

"How'd you like a nice little home out at Bondi close to the beach, where you could see all the swells getting sunburned, and have gas to cook with instead of wood, and maybe a piano?"

"I'd like it lots," she says slowly, "with the right man."

"How about me?"

Well, sir, she squeezes my hand and whispered:

"Dan, I don't know. Father needs me around the place and you know how a Kanaka cooks. The last one we tried wiped the frying-pans on his hair to make it greasy."

"He could get a Chink," I came back at her.

"We had one, and he nearly poisoned us. It's no use, Dan, I can't promise anything."

But she squeezes my hand again.

Just then Cruikshank and his brother starts a roughhouse, and first thing you know Lizzy's uncle comes staggering out to us with one eye bunged up and his mouth all bloody.

"I'm through," says he, "and I'm going away."

He was long and skinny and sorrowful.

"What happened this time?" asked Lizzy, who was used to it all.

"Your father's not fit company for a decent white man," says he. "He's cut me down to half a bottle of rum of an evening and he won't play cards any more. It's —— on this island. I'm going to Parevi. They know how to live over there."

And out came Cruikshank waving a —— big revolver.

He shouted—

"That's right, you ——. Get off my place as quick as you can. For two cents you'd lead me into the paths of sin. I know you, Marty Cruikshank, for what you are: You're a fiend incarnate. Get out!"

He always got that way after his second bottle, especially if he'd mixed in a bit of whisky.

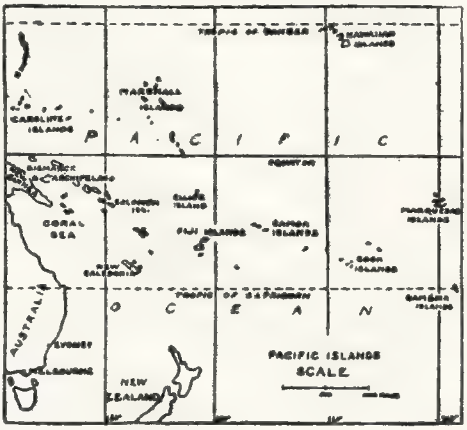
Marty looked at his brother, crying and wiping the blood from his mouth. Says he very solemn:

"I've worked for you all these long years and now you turn me out like a dog because you've become bigoted and won't play cards. You'll be sorry."

Cruikshank turns to me and bellows—

"Young man, you been loafing around here long enough. Take this elongated lump of inefficiency and crime off Ambrym."

Most times they patched things up, but this once they was both dead set. Seen too much of each other, I guess. Well, sir, I wanted to talk to old man Cruikshank about Lizzy and the house at Bondi, but he wouldn't listen: Lizzy made tracks upstairs and the two brothers went on hashing over past differences until close on morning, getting madder and madder all the time.



Marty couldn't get away quick enough. He knew his brother might change his mind because of the cotton being ready to pick, but Cruikshank was just as bad. Kept banging the gun on the table and shouting:

"Ballard's going to take you away. If he doesn't I'll shoot you dead. Ballard, take him away!"

"If I do," says I, "can I have Lizzy?"

"Anything," agrees Cruikshank, not listening at all. "Only take him away."

Well, sir, I took Marty across to Parevi. Him and the Kanaka chief were great friends, so it seemed, and when I left they was squatting together on a mat, drinking kava, while the tribe looked on.

I'LL skip a lot. About a month later I picked up a big load of coconut fiber from a guy in the Solomons and hustled down here to Sydney. I felt pretty good, I'll say. Still thinking about Lizzy, I took a run over to Bondi and looked over some bonza real estate. I saw one cottage with a nice lawn and stationary tubs in the basement and white enamel spread lavish in the kitchen and— But what's the use!

After that I strolled along the beach among the plutes and treated myself to a shilling cigar, and I sat me down on a bench on the promenade to enjoy it all.

So there I sat puffing at my shilling smoke when along comes a big husk of a fellow about six foot two, and ugly. He had one of those flat faces with his nose going in and his chin sticking out, and a long black scar on his right cheek from his mouth to his ear. A sight, he was, and his blue suit was all wrinkled—must have slept in it. But he had round, sleepy eyes like a poisoned bull pup's, and as I felt so darn good I said to him after a while—

"Stranger, it's a fine day with me. How's luck treating you?"

He turned out to be a quiet kind of a lad, name of Creegan, "Big Bill" Creegan, all face and no voice. He was—what do you call it?—apologetic. I dragged it out of him one word at a time and when he spoke his face all twisted up on one side because of the scar.

Ocean-going engineer, he said he was, and was on strike, so had nothing to do.

"Well," thinks I, "here's a big, strong fellow, out of work through no fault of his own except the strike. I'll do him a good turn, and if he's reliable I can let him handle the *Varatua* while I'm courting Lizzy."

Oh, yus, I was one of these here "employers of labor," and I had ideas about giving 'em a square deal then— But now! But that don't matter.

Well, sir, he sat there looking at me with his mournful eyes flush with the bridge of his nose, and he looked so foolish I was sorry for him. I says:

"How about working for me while the strike lasts? You'll see some interesting sights out in the islands, something to talk about when you go home."

"Islands!" says he, scornful but quiet. "I know 'em. Used to work for the S. & U. people. I was on the *Ruviana*."

"Good stuff," says I. "Then I won't have to break you in. Do you want the job?"

Did he want it? You bet he did, but he just nods his head and grunts a bit, and that's about all. That's how I signed on the best mate that ever handled a Kanaka crew. He loved it.

It got so I used to lie in a hammick reading house furnishing catalogs while Creegan went ashore to do business.

"Bill," says I one day, "d'you think you'd like to take a trip all alone? I got a private matter to attend to on Ambrym—very delicate matter. I'll split fifty-fifty with you while you're out alone."

He rolled his eyes toward me and grunts:

"Sure. Like it fine. Where d'you want to be dropped?"

"Ambrym," I explains. "Due south of Raga down in the Hebrides. We'll pick up the old Needle Top by tomorrow morning."

He shrugs his shoulders.

"I know it," he exclaims sadly. "Been there before for the S. & U."

That—S. & U. of his! He knew everything—or said he did. Queer. He just drifted along, and sometimes I thought he was clever, but more often I thought he was just blamed lucky. Fool's luck. You never can tell.

"Ever been to Gridley Bay?" I snapped back at him.

"Sure," says he, looking at me reproachfully. "That's Cruikshank's hang-out. I been there once or twice."

I was suspicious—every fellow that ever saw Lizzy fell for her at once, even the married ones with families—but one look at Creegan's big, flat mug made me happy again. My Liz wouldn't so much as glance at such a slab of raw meat.

"Is that so, Mr. Ballard?" he'd say. "Is that so? Well!"

That's all the encouragement I needed. I told him how we held hands, and about the stationary tubs in the cottage at Bondi I'd seen the day I met him, and about the way Lizzy smiled, and how she was thinking it over at that very minute.

The day we sighted Raga Creegan came to me looking all upset. Says he—

"Two of the bolt pins in the engine

base-plate are cracked to —— and the whole thing 'll rattle through into the sea if we start her up."

"Fix it," says I. "You're an engineer."

"It 'll take time," he sighs regretfully.

It did, and what's more there was no end to the troubles that cropped up that day. Properly speaking, with all her ailments, the *Varatua* should have keeled over right there and then in the Pentecost passage, but Creegan he kep' her afloat somehow, while I sprawled in the hammick and read up all about mahogany tea-wagons and fumed oak Empire dining-suits. I know how kings live now! I didn't care if we struck a blizzard so long as I reached Ambrym and got a grip on Lizzy's mitt.

We limped into Gridley Bay, and it looked grand. As Creegan said—

"It's a young and healthy garden of Eden."

Almost. Bit too populous for me.

And Cruikshank was down on the beach waiting for us with Lizzy holding on to his arm because his legs weren't steady.

"Bill," I says, wiping my perspiring hands on a bit of waste. "You turn right around and get busy cleaning up this neighborhood. Call for me in about a fortnight."

He scratches his ear and remarks—

"Can't put out again until the boat's patched up. It 'll take all of a week."

Well, sir, I believed him, and I was sorry for the poor boob with his ugly face.

"You've worked mighty hard," I told him. "Take a day off. Come ashore and be sociable."

THE Cruikshanks were that glad to see us! Hadn't spoken to a white man for months, and Lizzy's father was pining for a row with his brother what was over on Parevi.

I don't know why, but I didn't get a chance to talk to Liz on the back porch for the longest time. I'd hang around the kitchen while she was cooking, and Creegan would be hanging round too, and Cruikshank would stand in the doorway with a tumbler of rum in his hand, telling us about his cotton and what he'd do to Marty if ever Marty came back.

It was November and hot. The wood-fire made things worse, but there we all stuck, just gabbling and getting nowhere.

"When are you going to patch up that boat?" says I to Creegan on the second day.

"I'm resting," he answers quiet and sad, rubbing his hands together. "I'll start tomorrow."

"Don't let me hurry you," I says, very sarcastic, "but we're losing money and the shortest holidays are always the best. What's more, my business here is strictly private, understand?"

"Sure," says he. "I'll go look at the timber hereabouts right now. The starboard beam needs bracing."

And he ambles off on his big feet across the fields and into the underbrush beneath the mango trees.

I thought I had the place to myself, and I went scouting. Out in the kitchen, instead of Lizzy, there was a fat Kanaka killing chickens on the floor. Fair slaughterhouse he'd made of the place, and there was feathers all over him—sticking to his big lips and in his hair. Ever seen a Kanaka killing something? Well, it always destroys my appetite and makes me want to reach for my gun. And this guy was crunching the heads as he went along, beak and all. Yes, sir.

Says I—

"What the —— are you doing out here?"

"Making *kiki* for the master," says he, hacking away at the legs.

I don't eat chicken anymore at all. You couldn't tempt me with the juciest broiler, not if I was starving.

I couldn't believe my own eyes: Letting a nigger like that cook for the household. And me an almost son-in-law, as you might say. My soul and my stummick was in revolt.

"It's not good enough," thinks I. "I'll have it out with Cruikshank."

He'd just come in from the fields and was drinking whisky, which always made him melancholy. Rum was his tipple.

"Where's Liz?" says I, feeling my way slow and cautious. "I ain't seen her all morning."

"I don't know," says he, helpless like. "She's downed tools and walked out on me. Says she's tired of cooking and wants to live her own life. So I put Archibald in the kitchen and I guess we'll survive. He cooked for me once when I went up country."

"Have you seen Archibald lately?" says I.

"No," says he.

"Well, put down that whisky and go look.

He's taken the joy out of my stummick for some time to come."

Cruikshank takes one peep at the shambles and starts shouting for Liz to give over and live her life in the kitchen again. But she wasn't in the house.

"She said something about self-expression," Cruikshank tells me. "Perhaps she's out back studying the insects. She's like that sometimes. It's hard being a girl I suppose, but there's no knowing what she'll do next since she came back from Brisbane." And he sighs. "I wish Marty was with me now! Marty came in mighty handy at a time like this. He could cook and sew—let alone keep down his liquor like a gentleman. I treated him something awful."

A man's not in his right mind when he's in love. He'll do the foolest things! Says I—

"Crooky, suppose I fetch back your brother from Parevi; would you be happy?"

"Happy!" says he, draining his glass dry. "Happy 's no word for it. That's a good idea, Ballard. Go get him and tell him he's forgiven. And I need him to run the oil press, but you needn't tell him that. Just say he's forgiven and for him to come home to his brother."

"If I do," says I, cool as a cucumber, "may I have Lizzy for better or for worse as my lawful wife?"

He looks startled for a second and then relieved.

"You asked that once before, didn't you?" says he. "Why, I suppose you can have her. But first of all get me my brother. Lizzy's a good girl, but this here self-expression's too much of a strain on her old man."

So we shook hands and I had a shot of Irish just for luck. Then I tried to round up my engineer, that guy Creegan. He was out in the tall timber all right. Couldn't find him anywhere, and it was too hot to go galloping about. When I was hoarse with hollering I got busy on my own. Funny thing, that afternoon I went over the *Varatua* on bended hands and knees, and, will you believe me, there wasn't a —— thing wrong with that boat! Bit moldy in spots, but otherwise as sound as they make 'em, if she wasn't loaded to more'n her capacity.

"Creegan," thinks I, going ashore again, "is a lazy fool. He's worse than that. He's a fraud. Here I been trusting him all these months, paying him good wages, and he lets me down with a dull, sickening crash. I'll teach him to cheat his employer."

I found Cruikshank lying on the floor and Archibald sneaking off with a bottle of whisky. It was one fine house! Lizzy somewhere or other self-expressing herself, and Creegan, the flat-faced bum, somewhere else pretending to look for timber. Probably asleep under a tree. I was so mad I took a flying kick at Archibald.

"Get a bucket of water," says I, "and pour it over your master. I want to talk to him."

Crooky came to with a jerk.

"Listen here," says I, sitting on his chest for safety's sake. "I'm going after your brother no later than this minute. Keep your eye open for Creegan; he's deserted ship and I don't know where he is. When I come back I want Lizzy. Is it a trade?"

"Lemme breathe," says he. "I won't hurt you. Sure it's a trade—if she'll have you."

"That's all right," I says, "I'm not worrying about that. But watch out for Creegan. There'll be trouble when I see him, for he's forfeited his pay, and he may not like being stranded here all alone."

And I told him about Archibald and the whisky bottle. When I left he was chasing the Kanaka with a bull whip, for he set more store by his liquor than he did by his soul. As he said once:

"I can taste good rum and I can smell it and enjoy it, but my soul's just hearsay. Maybe I have one and maybe not. I'll stick to rum."

WELL, I reached Parevi next afternoon and before I could anchor, out glides a —— big canoe with the chief sitting in the bows.

"Come quick," says he, "for Ndonga"—that was his name for Marty—"is dying."

It's a —— of a place to get to, that village. Built on stilts out over the mud just clear of the jungle, and the niggers never set foot on solid ground. When they need food, manioc and such-like, they hop about on the roots of trees like monkeys. A —— of a place!

But I wanted Marty, and I went over the rail quick as lightning. Sure enough, I found him on the chief's platform all stretched out and yellow, thinner than ever and coughing blood.

"Marty," says I, "come home. Crooky's forgiven you and you can have all the liquor you want."

"Tell my brother," says he between coughs, "tell him I'm going to stay right here and die right here. I don't want his liquor. Kava's the best drink this side of creation even if it does get you in the legs."

"But," says I, "you're a sick man, Marty. Come home, Marty, where you can be nursed back to health and happiness."

"Go to ——," says he, wiping the blood off his lips with the back of his hand. "Tell my brother he's killed me and I'm too proud to accept charity in my hour of need." He coughs some more, weak-like, and adds: "Ballard, go hence. Your face is painful. I was happy until you washed ashore. Beat it."

Talk about luck! But I wasn't going to give in even though he was delirious and insulting because of it.

"Marty," says I, gentle and kind, "you're weak. If you won't come quiet I'll bat you one over the head and carry you on board the *Varatua*. It ain't natural for a man of your education to go native."

"I'm going to heaven," he whispers, "and I've talked enough. Go on, Ballard, give me air. Trot away."

As I bent down to pick him up he hollers to the Kanaka chief:

"Put this man back on his boat. Let him go unharmed. He——"

Then the blood choked him and he dropped back—stone dead. Yes, sir.

The Kanakas took it mighty hard. There I was on a rickety platform above the steaming mud, surrounded by a gang of hard-boiled cannibals with their teeth filed down to points, all ready to give me the acid test. I looks at Marty with his eyes wide-open and his face all streaked with black blood, and I looks at the Kanakas.

"He told you to let me go unharmed," says I, not expecting to see Liz never no more, "and if you don't obey his ghost will never give you peace."

They still believe in spooks out there in the islands, and they didn't call my bluff. Was I glad to get back on board the good old *Varatua*? Was I glad? I was so glad my knees just danced all by themselves out of joy.

I beat it, for the niggers had their war-canoes hauled down into deep water and they didn't seem any too friendly. Wouldn't let me have the corpse either—though I didn't hanker after it much, I must say. Two days with a dead man in that climate—Well, you probably know what I mean. It ain't healthy.

There's a strong easterly current carries across from Parevi to Ambrym. Something like a tide rip—comes rolling down the Pentecost Passage, washes Ambrym and gushes out into the real Pacific. Get caught in that and you're about done. But I was O. K. I made my landfall next day just after dawn.

Creegan, the big stiff, was waiting for me on the beach, whistling that —— thing about "Poor cockrobin, he hid his head under his wing," and looking at me with a grin on one side of his face and t'other side scowling. He was so ugly I was sorry for him—again. I'm that soft!

"Where did you get to, you pop-eyed fraud?" says I. "I'm on to you and your little tricks. A fine engineer you are."

He goes on grinning and scowling, half and half, and shakes his head and says nothing.

"Another time," says I, "when you want a holiday you'll know better'n to go wandering off when you may be wanted. I'm a tolerant man just once."

"Where's Marty?" says he, ignoring my remark.

"Dead," says I, "and his bones picked clean by this time."

That seemed to please Creegan. For once he said more'n two words on end.

"Let's go break the news to Cruikshank," says he. "He's longing for his brother and he's full of whisky."

Well, sir, I found Cruikshank rocking himself in the room where Marty used to sleep, crying soft to himself and holding a bottle between his knees.

Says he—

"Ballard, my friend, where's my poor brother?"

"He died happy," says I, lying nobly. "When I gave him your message he just sighed and passed out."

"Where's his body that I may bury him with my own repentant hands?" wails Crooky.

"I'm no embalmer," says I, feeling hurt. "And there's no cold storage space on the *Varatua*. What d'you expect me to do?"

"You broke your promise!" he shouts,

slinging the bottle at my head. "And you can't have Lizzy unless you produce my brother, dead or alive. D'you get that, you ——?"

Is that fair treatment, I ask you?

"Steady on," says I. "That wasn't in the contrac'. How could I snatch the body from those Kanakas? They wouldn't let me touch it. Couple of hundred of them and me all alone. D'you think I'm a Samson or what?"

"I don't care what you are," says he, "and don't be blasphemous. I want Marty's mortal remains to honor as is meet and proper, but I'm too old to go myself."

And he starts mumbling all to himself.

In comes Lizzy in a white dress, looking like an angel.

"Your father won't let me marry you," says I, "unless I fetch your uncle's dead body what the Parevi Kanakas wouldn't let me take away."

"Poor Dan," says she, shedding a pretty tear for Marty. "I'm very sorry."

It didn't sound enthusiastic, but it made me feel better. Even so, I couldn't see myself fighting those Kanakas single-handed for a skeleton. Says I:

"I'll take Creegan along with me and perhaps we can pinch what's left of Marty if we're careful. Then when I come back, Crooky——"

Liz had chucked the whisky bottle out of the window and was holding on to her father's arm just above the elbow for his legs was treating him rough.

He laughs out loud all of a sudden and declares.

"There'll be no peace of mind for me until I put Marty under the sod and place a wreath on his cross. That's all I'm living for. Whoever comes back with the goods marries Lizzy."

"Does that mean me too?" pipes up Creegan from the doorway, where he'd been standing listening to the confab.

"Come one, come all," sings out Crooky. "Sure it means you, Creegan."

It struck me as funny, for I knew my Liz wasn't going to marry any flat-faced bum like that. Not her—with her self-expression.

Says I—

"Liz, darling, tell 'em how we're engaged and about the house at Bondi, so Creegan won't have any false hopes and break his heart."

She cast her eyes down on the floor, modest-like and shy, and answers—

"I'll abide by my father's decision and I'll marry whoever suits him best."

Just that! You could have knocked me out with a feather.

"Don't sacrifice yourself like this," I begs of her, "just to suit an old man's whim."

"Oh, don't you think you stand a chance against Bill—I mean Mr. Creegan?" she says, still not looking up.

Crooky laughs.

"That's a true daughter for you," says he. "Go ahead, Ballard, don't stand here talking. Creegan's already under way. You'll be heavily handicapped unless you start right now."

Sure enough, Creegan was trotting down to the beach. I didn't stop to say goodbye or nothing. Just hopped through the window and started running before I hit the ground. I caught up with him just as the two black boys were shoving off.

"Hold on," says I. "Creegan, you're fired. Get out of that boat."

"Hop in," says he. "If you fire me now I'll break your neck."

Well, I was all out of breath, and I thought as he didn't really stand a chance with Lizzy that I might as well use him for what he was worth, so I hopped in.

"Is that what you've been trying to do while I been away," says I, aching for a stand-up fight, "been trying to steal my girl, eh?"

"Steal nothing," says he. "You haven't——"

But he shut up like a clam and wouldn't talk no more at all although pressed to do so.

ALL the way over he kept quiet and most of the time he slept, and when he wasn't sleeping he was doing that lopsided grin of his, which nearly drove me wild.

And believe me or not, girl or no girl, I didn't like the idea of asking favors of them Kanakas. They don't see things as you and I do. Ain't got no culture.

When we sighted Parevi I was still in the dark, as you might say. Couldn't think of a decent plan. Did it worry me? Why, of course, but I wasn't going to let on to Creegan. He'd have been too pleased—and, as I knew, he didn't have brains enough to be any help to a guy like me.

Then he comes to me very solemn, while

we was still about ten miles out and heading for the inlet.

"Haven't forgotten what Cruikshank said, have you?" says he.

"No," says I, "but have a heart, Creegan. The girl wouldn't marry you. You know why, at that. I don't want to be nasty——"

"And you haven't forgotten what she said either, have you?" he goes on.

"No," says I.

"Very well, then," he sighs, "from now on its war to the knife, Mr. Ballard."

And he pats his pocket where his automatic made an unhealthy bulge. But I had one, too, all loaded and cocked, and I says:

"Creegan, you're an ungrateful fool. First you lied to me and then you were absent without leave——"

"Shucks," says he, grinning, "this ain't no battleship. I stayed away on purpose. Had four real days with Lizzy all to myself. You don't think she'd marry a short little runt like you, do you?"

"Don't be personal," I comes back, "and mind your own business. And listen, Creegan: We'll have to work together on this job, whether we like it or not. What say first man touches Marty's bones gets first chance to ask Liz?"

I was a sportsman in those days. But no more! However——

He said he was agreeable to the scheme, and when the *Varatua* was close inland we got ready to land.

"Been here before?" I asks him sarcastic-like, remembering his experiences with the S. & U.

The big boob didn't see it.

"No," says he. "Parevi's new to me."

"So's the lingo then," says I. "You let me do the palavering and keep both your lamps on the niggers. They ain't as meek and mild as you might suppose."

Well, sir, that village was still in the same place, not washed away nor anything, but this time nobody came out to greet us. There was a big bunch of Kanakas standing on the platforms looking down at us but not one of them so much as called out "how d'you do?" Just stood there on one leg like a lot of black crows. Beneath the piles I could see their canoes bobbing up and down, for it was high tide and the mud was covered over, which was a blessing for it could smell something foul.

As we came in close I saw the black boys were all dolled up like Astor's pup: Nose-bones and feathers and everything. I was just about to tell Creegan as how the situation didn't look what you might call rosaceous when the chief comes prancing down to the edge of his private pier and shouts out:

"Keep off! We're sending Ndonga's soul to heaven no later than today and we don't want no interference."

He said it differently, but that's what he meant in his barbaric dialec'.

"Gimme his bones," I sings out. "His own brother wants to bury them according to white man custom."

"Go float," says he. "Ndonga told me all about his blackguard of a brother and before he died he ate a bit of tindalo fish"—it's a wiggly thing about as big as my little finger and it lives in the mud—"which made him our blood relative. You can't have his bones."

"We'll have to resort to force," says I to Creegan. "Get your gun ready, but don't flourish it just yet. Surprize is nine points of law."

He bats his round eyes and sits quiet.

"Not afraid, are you?" I goes on. "If so I'll do the dirty work alone."

And I would, too, so help me, me thinking so much of Lizzy.

"Afraid," says he, grinning on the lee side of his face. "Not yet, but there's no telling."

So we pulls in a bit closer.

"As a favor," I shouts to the chief, "lemme have one last look at my friend's remains."

"No," says he stubborn-like. "His bones are clean and strapped up, ready for the last journey, and they're in the ghost house, which is not to be desecrated by the likes of you."

The ghost house was a biggish hut on a platform of its own to the left of the village, close to the spot where we lay. Still arguing with the Kanaka, we paddled quietly toward the ladder and the natives sidled along, keeping up with us.

"Creegan," says I, "you wait at the head of the ladder while I make a grab at Marty's bones. Don't let the Kanakas reach the dingy or we'll never see Ambrym any more."

He hadn't the brains of a chicken, that fellow. He laughs:

"First man touches the bones wins first chance to propose. You can't fool me, Mr. Ballard."

Well, there was no time to talk it over, and we was both too excited and jumpy for that sort of thing. The dingy scrapes against the steps, I could see the calloused feet above me milling and stamping. Not looking up, I fires and leaps, with Creegan close behind me.

There was four dead Kanakas dripping blood down into the water in about four seconds. The crowd burst open. Bingo! There was Creegan about two inches behind me, snorting as he ran and firing each time he snorted. Remarkable cool, he was. The natives just disappeared, at least most of them did, dropped down out of sight, but I didn't have time to think. Not then. That came later.

I squeezed through the door of the ghost house ahead of Creegan. It was black as sin in there after the white sunlight on the water. I went groping around one way and Creegan went the other. Suddenly I looks up and there was a skeleton all tied up like a sack of oats with its knees beneath its chin, resting on an upturned basket.

"Got him!" I sings out, making a lunge to touch it first. "Here's poor Marty."

Creegan, he was quicker than you might think. He leaped at the same time and we both smacked the skull together. It fell off and went rolling across the floor—bumpety-bump, bouncing a bit. It came my way, because Creegan hit it the hardest, and I had it under my arm quick as lightening.

"It's mine," says I. "Let's get out of this."

"It ain't yours," snarls Creegan, real vicious. "We both connected at the same time."

And with him pulling at my elbow we made a break for the open. And what d'you suppose those —— Parevi Kanakas had done? Gone out in their canoes and boarded the *Varatua!* As I reached the doorway I saw 'em swarming up the sides.

"Look, Creegan," says I. "Look at what's happened because of your mean disposition. We're done for now."

"——!" says he. "Let's get to the dingy and chase 'em away."

But not on your life did we reach the dingy. Some of them Kanakas were hiding close to the hut. I don't know what happened exactly, but first I saw a club catch Creegan in the neck and his knees bent and bent until he lost his balance and fell down on his face.

And me? Something hit me, too, from behind and I felt awful sick and giddy.

I was hit again, full in the stomach, by a great black ape, and I remember being stretched out looking up at the sky which hurt my eyes because it wasn't blue but hot and white. Then, I guess, I passed out for a bit.

When I woke up the natives was holding a convention above us. Some was for spearing us through the gizzard and having an ox-roast there and then, but the old men, and the chief in particular, raised objections. You see, they hadn't forgotten what Marty said just before he died about me not being harmed. Good old Marty!

"That doesn't mean he ain't to be killed," puts in one hungry-looking guy, his big mouth all watering. "It wouldn't do him no harm to die."

He'd have made a good lawyer all right, that one.

"You're wrong," says the chief, "and you know it. I won't have him killed—" meaning me—"and that other one'll have to live too, for he's ugly enough to be Ndonga's brother."

How they can talk, those Kanakas! And the sun was eating into my eyeballs all the time, sort of getting in behind my closed eyelids and shooting into my brain. Once in a long while I'd take a peep at Creegan, who lay quiet, blood caking on his neck and down his singlet. His head was twisted over sideways, grinning at me, stiff and solemn. I thought he'd gone to the drawer and I felt kind of sorry for him. And in between us lay Marty's skull, all his gold-filled teeth twinkling as if he was happy and laughing at something or other.

Then I heard the chief say—

"It's this way: Ndonga's going to our heaven and he'll need an escort to wait on him when he gets there, so we'll send these two men along with him so's he can give orders in his mother-tongue."

"Where we going?" says I, propping myself up a bit.

"To the island of the dead beyond the rim of the sea," retorts the chief, "where you'll be Ndonga's slaves."

"But he said you weren't to harm me," says I.

"No more will we," says he. "You'll start off alive, make no mistake."

And with that they picked us up and carried us down to a small canoe with one outrigger and dumped us in, me in the bows and Creegan in the stern. Him all doubled over with his head hanging between his knees because he was still knocked out. Then they trotted out Marty's bones and stacked them up reverently amidships, laying the skull, which was cracked in spots, on top of the pile.

"Hold on," says I to the chief. "You're a deep-sea sailor yourself. How can I reach the island of the dead without so much as a mat sail or a paddle—let alone food?"

"Never worry," says he, "Ndonga's soul will guide you."

Can you beat that for optimism?

"And shut up," says he, "because if you don't I'll change my mind about not hurting you."

Then all the canoes shot out full of men singing and banging drums, and the women lined the platforms shrieking for all they were worth—and, believe me, they can shriek to the queen's taste.

Our canoe was towed up the inlet, past the poor old *Varatua*, which was burning, and her mainmast fell over just then with a —— of a splash and a sizzle.

"Good-by," thinks I, with the first glimmer of reason I'd had for a long, long time. "There goes ten years work all because of a girl who don't know her own mind."

They hauled us through the passage in the outer reef and right out to sea where the blue begins, and then all the canoes paddled up close to us. The Kanakas sang some more songs about this and that warrior what would greet Marty when he reached this here dead man's home of incurables, and then the chief threw some stuff into the boat. There was a raw yam and a string of shell money and a piece of baked fish wrapped in a banana leaf, which the ants had got at, and one unhusked coconut.

"Don't touch that," says the chief. "It's for Ndonga's soul to feed on until he can grow something of his own in his new home. You work hard, too, so he won't come back and plague us."

With that he gave us one good hard shove and all the canoes turned about and raced toward Parevi, not one man again glancing at us.

And there we were, drifting away at a great rate.

A FIRST it was smooth as glass, but soon there came along one of those big rollers, all oily and unbroken. It swooshed beneath us and up we went, twisting sideways on the crest, and down we went sliding into the trough where we wallowed waiting for the next one to lift us, and I knew then that we was in the Pentecost current with not a dog's chance of ever being picked up.

Marty's skull and the coconut kept sliding and slipping, slipping and sliding like a pair of billard balls and Creegan had fallen over, trailing one hand in the water, which must have attracted the sharks for there was a couple of 'em snooping around, darting about real lively with their fins bobbing up and shooting along.

Ten knots an hour we must have been doing. Ten knots toward nowhere except this —— island of the dead.

Say, it was hot! Where my shirt was ripped open the sun burned through, and I could feel the skin getting red and puffy. And my eyes were hurting something awful. Could hardly keep 'em open because of the glare.

Well, I had to do something or go mad and jump overboard, so I worked my way across the bones and stretched out Creegan so as to have a good look at him. And it weren't by any means an easy job, him being so big and clumsy. That blow on the back of the head would have killed anybody else, but he was still breathing, weak though and too fast with a short rattle each time he filled his lungs.

"Water," says I to myself. "That's what he needs."

But there was only that coconut and I didn't have a thing to open it with. Hours it took me to get off the husk, for I was all trembly and, I remember, I was blubbering like a kid as I kneeled there scratching at the tough fibers with my nails. First thing I knew it was night, all black but for the stars and those sharks cutting milky streaks all about us.

Then I got the coconut open and cracked off the top on the gunnel. I broke in Marty's ribs crawling back beside Creegan because on the way I was sick due to the rollers.

But I fed him the milk, a sip at a time, and fooled around in the darkness trying to fix up his head. Soon he began to squirm and after that it was easy going. It took him a long time to get the hang of events after he'd been laid out, and first he cursed himself and then he cursed me and he was scared silly, but he wouldn't say anything about that.

"It's no use cussing," says I. "Our number's up and we might as well face it out like white folk."

It was sometime later, toward dawn, that we made it up. We thought we was gonna croak and sort of slopped over each other, there being nobody to observe us. He said Lizzy was too good for him anyhow and he was sorry he'd ever come between me and her, and I said it was every man for himself in such matters as love and war and he had a perfec' right to chance his luck.

When it grew light we ate the coconut meat. There wasn't much of it, because of its being so young, but it kept us busy and not able to think about things too much.

And then, all in a second, it was hot again, hot as blazes and no wind. My skin was raw and cracked, so sore I could hardly move. Creegan was no better off. The wood was scorching to the touch and those —— bones were all white and shiny. That —— skull chasing shadows all over the bottom in between our legs!

"Let's give Marty to the fishes to gnaw on," says Creegan, collecting odd bits that had slid his way. "He makes me dizzy—glittering like this."

"Quit it," says I, grabbing the skull. "This here current goes past Ambrym. It's a thousand to one shot, but Crooky might spy us and come out."

"Is that so?" grunts Creegan. "Why didn't you say so sooner?"

And he takes back all he'd said about not wanting to take Lizzy from me. But I had Marty's head, and I says:

"Them bones ain't no good. All that counts is the skull. Crooky'll recognize it by the gold teeth, but he couldn't tell his brother's shin-bones from those of a bow-legged Kanaka. You lose, Creegan, so be quiet—you're rocking the boat."

But the flat-faced bum he comes creeping toward me, forgetful of his wounds and what I done for him, and he says—

"I'll fight you for it, and ——, and the loser goes to the sharks."

We was both weak as kittens, and it wasn't in any way a real fight. We had to be so careful about not upsetting. Creegan grabbed my ankle and I kicked him in the jaw; still he came on, and I hit him one rap over the spot where the club got him, and that was the end of the set-to.

After that we lay back and was thirsty and half-blinded by the glare. But, mark you, I had the skull safe behind my back.

Things grew worse as the day went by. I've only got bits of it left in my mind's eye. I can remember Creegan with his tongue all thick and black, nursing Marty's shanks and whispering to 'em—

"Lizzy, my sweetest one in the world!"

His ugly face was screwed up sideways and tears were trickling down the black stubble on his cheeks.

I know, I wondered where he got the water to make tears with, and thinking as how I might gouge out his eyes to find out.

Late afternoon, it must have been, when I found myself singing:

"Come where the booze is cheaper,
Come where the jugs hold more."

Only I wasn't making a sound for my throat was closed up. Funny!

I thought the top of my head was going to blow off, it was so boiling hot inside. Then I laughed at Creegan, I dunno why—perhaps because his face was bright red and the skin was coming off in strips where he'd rubbed his eyes with his knuckles. He laughed, too, making a queer sound, all gurgly, and we both lay there cackling at the flaming sky.

Creegan all of a sudden threw Marty's shanks overboard and started reaching down for a drink. You should have seen them sharks' fins streak in toward us when they spotted his shadow. *That* quick!

I dragged him back and he looked up at me mournful and kind of surprized, but I couldn't talk—just lay there on top of him choking fit to die.

'Nother funny thing: I ripped the skin off my forearm grabbing at him and when the blood started to flow I was fool enough to suck at it. Had a crazy notion it would do me good. I stopped when I found my teeth biting in without my knowing it, but it didn't hurt. Ain't that funny?

That last bout finished Creegan. He said something about being "washed clean by sweet rains," and collapsed all loose and flabby in the bottom of the canoe.

I guess the night was worse than the day in some ways: Seeing the sharks leave those bubbly phosphorescent trails, and the stars swinging by all orderly and indifferent. I lay where I was with my face between Creegan's boots and I could feel the skin on my cheeks rubbing off against his soles, but I didn't care. All I could do was to count the rollers as they passed beneath us. When I'd reach "three," I'd rebegin all over again. And we went up and down, up and down, twisting always a bit on the crest of each wave.

I know, when I saw the first light of day coming into the sky I hid my face and bellowed with fear for I was dead scared of the heat. Men do queer things when they're alone like that, up against the Almighty playing a cold deck. And I've met some fellows who say they've remembered all their sins at times like that and been sorry. But I guess I'm different, for I wasn't thinking about anything much save how thirsty I was and how much Creegan's feet got on my nerves, swinging from side to side as the canoe rocked. Each time a wave lifted us the soles of his boots rubbed together and I shoved my coat between 'em, for the noise they made was more than I could bear. I knew he was still alive because he was breathing through his mouth, going—

"Hrrrrr. Hrrrrr. Hrrrrr!"

Like a man snoring, only harsher and more difficult.

Me, the little guy, I was still holding out. But when it came on daylight my eyes began to hurt awful. All I could see was the broken-down soles of Creegan's shoes and lots of round black spots dancing in a white sky. It was those black spots drove me crazy, for they twirled about without end, and some of 'em banged together and burst, and turned blood-red and blazing hot. Even with my eyes shut I couldn't very well keep 'em out, and I knew the sun had got inside my head and would crack it open.

But I had sense enough to think of Marty's skull. I had my thumb crooked in the hole where the spine fits in and I held on so tight my hand was numb.

Soon after that I was praying, old-home-week style, and the prayer would trail off into counting waves and then bits of hymns. Lor', I don't know! It's all jumbled up.

Well, those glistening black spots kept growing larger and then smaller and busting up, so thinks I to myself—

"I'll keep my eyes closed tighter than ever and watch just one of them things steady, then perhaps the others will stop bothering me."

However, I couldn't manage it because each time the canoe rocked my lids would flutter a bit and I'd have to try all over again.

All of a sudden I got one black splotch fixed good and proper. I held on like grim death until I broke into a cold sweat and the other spots stood still and dwindled away. Just one black thing left bobbing up and down.

Then I saw the spot wasn't bobbing at all! The canoe was doing that. The spot was growing larger and larger all the time, and I knew for sure it was land. I tried to cheer but couldn't. I just whispered—

"That's Ambrym!"

And it sounded so funny I had to cry.

It kept on growing bigger and bigger, but all I could see was two blobs, which I knew were the hills, and a long black streak which was the coast line.

And we was drifting by.

I tried to stand up and signal, but I couldn't use my legs. I lay there and waved an arm, and the strap of my singlet cut a red groove in my shoulder where the sun had burnt it to a crisp.

It was ——, that bit. Worse'n anything else. Flopping about like a porpoise on dry land, and as helpless.

I saw we was edging in closer and closer, so close the hills seemed right on top of us, and I could hear the boom of the surf. I was on my knees rubbing my eyes with my fingers, but the more I rubbed the less I could see. I hadn't let go the skull either and I tried to hold it up to attract attention, but it was too heavy to lift.

Then the crash of the surf began to dwindle—not much, but I noticed it—and the hills weren't coming any closer. That got me where it hurt most, for east of Ambrym it's bitter salt water all the way to Fiji, and when I thought of those rollers that were going to rock me into Kingdom Come my teeth began to chatter and I went loony.

I tried to heave myself out, but I couldn't for the gunnel was too hot to touch with my raw hands and I couldn't jump because the skull weighted me down. I threw myself part way out and just hung there, my body resting across one of the outrigger booms, and I was too weak to move. I could see my shadow on the water beneath me all twisted and wiggly as if it were bathing and having a grand time.

How long I lay there I don't know. Next thing I remember is hearing the *clock-click* of oarlocks and a voice out of nowhere shouting—

"Hold on, Dan, we're coming!"

It was Lizzy! I slid right out onto my shadow in the water, and it was so cool I didn't give a darn what happened.

Somebody caught me by a wrist and dragged me up over the side of a boat. It's plain as day to me even now. I can still remember how it hurt being hauled over the side, but I didn't care—Lizzy being so close and I still had ahold of Marty's skull as evidence.

I dozed off, though I didn't want to, after I was given a drop of water, but I could still hear voices, and Lizzy was saying:

"Oh, you poor thing! How you must have suffered! Oh, my poor darling!"

It sounded pretty good to me, and I lay there for a while trying to smile through my salt-cracked lips. Some job!

After a bit I felt the boat glide into smooth water and I opened one eye as best I could and looked up expecting to find my head in Lizzy's lap. But not on your life! I was resting against old Crooky's knee! He sat puffing a —— big black cigar and scowling down at me.

"Here," says I, trying to wake up. "Here's Marty's mortal remains, or what's left of 'em. I guess I win."

"Win nothing," says he. "Ballard, you fool, don't you know better'n to take a sick man at his word? When I'm drinking whisky I'm liable to say most anything. Rum's my drink."

"Don't you *want* Marty's skull?" croaks I.

"Filthy thing," says he. "Pitch it overboard."

And with that he ups and chucks it into the water.

"But what about Lizzy?" says I, for I could still hear her cooing like a little gray dove. "Ain't she speaking to me?"

"Oh, of course not," says he, surprized like. "She's caring for Creegan——"

"But you said——"

"Now keep quiet," he warns me. "You're mighty low just now. And what I said before you went away don't count because of the whisky. Creegan and Liz fixed up to get married while you was out after Marty that first time. Liz, she's a wise girl, she said nothing about it until I sobered up. Now, don't take it so hard, Ballard——"

"If that's so," says I, trying to sit up, but unable to do so, "why did Creegan come along with me? Why didn't he stay right here?"

Crooky laughed as if he hadn't a care in the world.

"Lor'," says he, "you poor nut! How could Creegan know I wasn't in earnest? And what's more he wanted his back-pay, see? Guess you'll have to pay him his wages. He'll need 'em now, every penny of 'em, now he's got my Liz."

And there I was: Lost my girl, lost my boat, lost my money—all because of an ugly-faced bum with an inch-wide scar on his cheek!

With that I passed out for a good long while, only remembering seeing black Archibald kneeling on my chest while Crooky poured rum down my throat, and most of it missed its mark and burned its way down the back of my neck.

HARD luck? Well, sir, for months I was pretty bad. I came across here to Sydney and went to work down at the ship-yards. But every time I thought of Lizzy I took a chill and had to have a drink, which lost me my job.

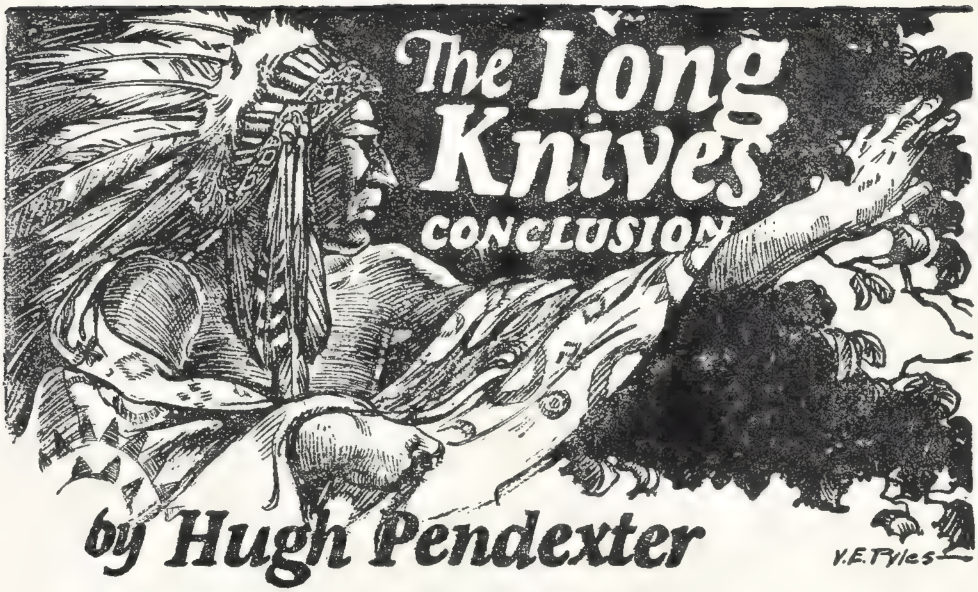
But what do you know? I heard only yesterday that Creegan's not the boy-wonder they thought he was. Oh, he came 'round all right and the *padre* on Mae married 'em good and tight, and he stayed on Ambrym to help Crooky with the cotton. But that's not all: Lizzy's been pestering him ever since to get her a house at Bondi, and he won't do it because, he says, if he does she'll meet handsome fellows like me and leave home.

And now, so I heard yesterday from the S. & U. buyer, every time Lizzy mentions my name Mr. Ugly-Face Creegan takes to breaking plates about the house. He's got 'em scared green.

So life ain't so bad after all, and tomorrow I'm going back to sea for the S. & U., what's giving me a chance on the *Ruviana.*

But think what I missed! If a woman'll do that to one man she's likely to do it to any other—and old Crooky's given up rum for good, too, all he drinks is whisky. I'll bet Creegan's having a thin time on Ambrym even though he does smash the crockery.

No, sir, life ain't so dusty after all.



The Long Knives

CONCLUSION

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Old Misery," "Red Autumn," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IN JUNE of 1793 I was returning from Canada, where in the rôle of a deserter from the American Army I had learned much of value to General "Mad Anthony" Wayne concerning British dealings with the Indians. Reaching Virginia, I crossed to the forks of the Ohio by way of the "Bloody Road." As I strode along the forest path, checkered by light and shade from the overhanging forest trees, I recollected the tragic history of that trail. There the red death had skulked upon the footsteps of settlers, and there the armies of Burgoyne and St. Clair had been annihilated by arrow and tomahawk. I prayed that Wayne's army—the army of the "Long Knives," as the Americans were called by the Indians—would not meet a similar fate in the coming campaign.

At this time Mad Anthony Wayne was at Cincinnati. To join him I stopped at Pittsburg and took the boat down the Ohio. On the boat with me were a number of Yankee immigrants, among them an odd combination of innocence, genius and bravery named Hate-Evil Durgin. His peculiarities repelled his fellow-travelers and attracted me; we drifted into acquaintance. I told him my name—Peter Watson; my business—spy for Mad Anthony; and my mission—to rejoin the Army and to learn something on the way of a white renegade named Quain, one of a group of whites, including the Girtys and Black Dorman, who were red men at heart.

"Hate" Durgin refused to be cowed by the prospect of meeting these men.

"I won't turn tail to anything short of the ——," he said. "And that ain't bragging neither. The Durgins don't brag."

I looked at him calculatingly. He might be scatter-brained and a dreamer, I decided, but he was too stubborn of soul to give ground before anything that walked on legs.

So at Marietta, Ohio, when I left the boat and continued my way by canoe, I was not displeased that Durgin should have decided to leave the immigrants and to throw in his lot with me. He seemed to think that in the Army he might have leisure to work out some of the inventions he had in mind. We paddled down the river together.

Some thirteen miles down, Durgin was exhausted and insisted on landing. I complied, for I needed sleep. We climbed the hill by an ancient path which led us at length to a solitary cabin. The occupant proved to be a powerful man with a white beard, at first suspicious but finally willing to let us stay for the night.

As we talked together before the roaring fire, which he strangely insisted on keeping up despite the Summer weather, I asked him Quain's whereabouts.

"I may have heard the name, but I don't remember it," he pondered.

And then in answer to our questions he said that the huge fire was for his rheumatism's sake. When he stepped into the back room, however, I thrust a poker into the embers and raked out four buttons and some fragments of smoldering cloth. Our host had been burning garments. Then we heard men coming up the path.

"We must clear out," I whispered.

"Through the back room," Durgin agreed. "That feller must 'a' left the house that way."

As we lifted the buffalo-robe curtain and went in we discovered that a man had been murdered. His naked body lay in the bunk, and the bloody knife was stuck in the wall.

In horror we ran out toward the river. We heard the bearded man behind us calling to the other men. They hailed him by name. He was Quain!

Durgin halted pursuit for an instant by hurling an ax at the leader, but soon they were after us

"The Long Knives," copyright, 1924, by Hugh Pendexter.

We gained our canoe barely in time and flashed down the river ahead of them.

Some miles down we found an ally in Old Podge, a veteran hunter of the region, who forced us at the muzzle of his rifle to take him on board. At first I did not welcome him, but later when he had helped Durgin and me to repulse Quain's party I realized that he was of great assistance to us, although he was obsessed with the idea that White Tom, a Delaware whose son he had killed, was on his trail. Quain bothered us no more on the journey. I hoped that one of our bullets had put him out of the world. Still farther down the river the Night Walker, the leader of Wayne's Chickasaw scouts, joined us.

With little more trouble we came to Cincinnati. There Durgin, after a fight with Ogden, a sergeant who made sport of his Yankee peculiarities, joined Wayne's army. As a result of the fight General Wayne gave orders that no more men be allowed outside of camp without passes.

I reported to the general and told him what I had learned of British and Indian plans. Wayne agreed with me that Alexander McKee, the British Indian agent, was the stimulator of all the trouble between Indians and whites. When my report was over General Wayne thanked me. Then he drummed his fingers softly on the table and asked—

"You would volunteer to go back if it were considered a military necessity?"

I thought of the dangers I had just been through. I shrank from the nervous strain of another Winter among the English and remembered the ignominious fate of a spy. But I answered—

"I am ready at any time, sir."

My heart was heavy as I passed from the hut and walked to the outskirts of the camp to be alone while I thought it over.

I HAD not been long in camp before one Hodgecomb, a recent recruit, was branded for desertion. He was about to be drummed out of camp when I recognized him as Quain. He was thereupon held for hanging as a spy. Quain escaped, however, and fled to the north. I suspected that Ogden, who was his guard that night, could have told how the escape had been effected.

I expected to be detailed to hunt for him; but instead General Posey, the post commander, asked me to go on a quite different mission.

"Can you win north to Detroit over the Bloody Way, Watson?" he inquired.

The dreaded request, foreshadowed by General Wayne's question, had been made; again I must venture into the heart of hostile Indian and British territory as a spy.

"Our commissioners are treating with the Indians there," Posey went on. "If they can not arrange a peace, if war is to come, we must know at once. The War Department has arranged for messengers, but General Wayne will feel more secure if in addition to them he had one of his own scouts fetching the word. You are not detailed for this work, you understand."

"I volunteer," I told him.

And so it was arranged.

As an incidental mission I planned the death of a hostile Indian who had been lurking about camp, murdering our soldiers. It was necessary to "get" him, for he was disguised with the yellow ribbon which was the insignia of our own Chickasaw and Choctaw scouts, with the natural result that the soldiers suspected treachery on the part of their allies. The Night Walker as leader of the Chikcasaws accordingly announced that he would go with me to lend his aid in wiping out the suspicion which rested on his men. Durgin and Podge were my other two companions.

It was decided that I was to leave camp alone in the guise of a deserter, for such was to be my rôle when I finally came to the Shawnee country and to Detroit. A short distance out I met the Night Walker, who painted and dressed me in the Indian fashion.

Then we separated to search for the hostile. It was my luck to come upon him and kill him by a stratagem, much to the Night Walker's disappointment. The latter took the dead man's head back to camp to prove that it was a Miami, not a Chickasaw, who had committed the murders, and returned with Podge. Like myself Podge was stripped and painted Indian fashion; but his purpose in assuming the disguise was to delude White Tom, the Delaware, who he thought was still on his trail. Podge said that Durgin had quarreled with him and was gone off by himself. That bit of information worried me, for Durgin was no woodsman.

We three traveled on toward the north and Detroit. At the Auglaze the Night Walker unexpectedly declared that a dream had warned him to go no farther.

"Two will make four," was his enigmatic statement. "If one dies the voice may send the Night Walker to make four."

WE HAD gone only a few miles farther when we were captured by a party of Shawnees, who had already made prisoners of Durgin and a young pioneer woman named Liz Pleiss.

"Oh, Lawd! The Chickasaw had the right of it!" cried Old Podge. "Two's become four. That means we're dished."

Spotted Snake, the leader of the Shawnees, condemned us to the stake, and his young men commenced painting us black in preparation for the burning. Just then Simon Girty the renegade approached. We recognized him by the scar on his forehead. He halted before Old Podge, wrinkled his brows and said:

"You make me think of somebody. What's your name?"

"Simpson," muttered my friend, greatly fearing to be recognized as the man who had booted Girty years before.

I succeeded in persuading Girty to intercede on our behalf; and at last the death signs were washed off us and the march was resumed.

At the junction of the Maumee and Auglaize we came to eight stout cabins occupied by Indian traders operating under the British flag—George Ironside, Pirault, McKenzie, Elliott, Simon Girty's brother James, and McKee the British Indian agent. Here Spotted Snake sold Mrs. Pleiss to James Girty as a servant for James' wife, the Indian woman Shawnee Betsy.

Across the river was a Shawnee village of some sixty houses, of which the great leader Blue Jacket, or Weyapiersenwah, was the chief. On entering the village Spotted Snake took us to the river side of the settlement and placed us in a stout ten-by-ten cabin under guard. On the other bank we could see a Delaware village of eighteen houses, which Old Podge was sure sheltered his enemy White Tom.

He hardly knew which to dread more—the possibility of the Indian's vengeance, or of Girty's.

Durgin made friends with the Indian boys by turning his mechanical ingenuity to constructing arrows and slings. At his request they brought him some seasoned ash, out of which he promised to make them something that would surprize them. With this he made a powerful cross-bow for himself and for the boys some air-sailing darts. To test the cross-bow he sent a bolt over the Delaware village and then hid the weapon.

The flight of the whizzing bolt, far faster than any arrow, quickly became a topic for animated discussion. Spotted Snake asserted that it was his medicine flying over the village.

"It was Spotted Snake's medicine voice," he declared. "It will talk very soon about two white men. The voice will soon call us to the east and south. Where it leads, Weyapiersenwah's children the Shawnees and their grandfathers the Delawares will burn and kill."

Simon Girty shrewdly utilized the incident as the text for a discourse to divert the Snake's thoughts from his prisoners and to encourage the Indians to believe that it was a portent forecasting a widespread destruction of the white race.

"Blue Jacket wanted me to do what I could to help you two," he explained later to Old Podge and me. "He's a smart Injun. Minute he heard the medicine talk he knew it meant the stake or Detroit for you. McKee ain't here now, but when he comes back Blue Jacket knows he'll want to take you to Detroit to be questioned by Colonel Richard England, commandant. The Yankee will stay here. He ain't in any danger."

Then, as he was totally illiterate, he asked us to read him "a piece of writing." It was from Quain, who wrote it from the village of the Wyandot chief, Tarhe. In it he told of his adventures in the American army and ended by asking that word be sent to him whether he should report to McKee on the Maumee or at Detroit.

I WROTE Girty's reply, which told Quain to start for Blue Jacket's village, or else to send his report to the British Indian agent McKee. In return, Girty procured for us the freedom of the village.

Quain's letter had been brought to Girty by Ogden—of all men!—who had turned deserter. To stop his mouth Durgin shot him with the cross-bow, using one of Blue Jacket's private war-arrows. I cast suspicion on White Tom, who had just turned up at the Delaware village opposite. The murder incident seemed to be closed when White Tom encountered Podge shortly afterward and the two killed each other. Poor Old Podge! His presentiment proved correct.

The Night Walker appeared in the guise of a deserter, dressed—or, rather, undressed—us like Indians and helped us to escape in a canoe. As we made our way north along the Maumee the Night Walker killed a tracker named Big Bear, and Durgin shot another Shawnee with his bow-gun.

At last we came in sight of McKee's place, where we planned to seek refuge. Here our Indian ally announced:

"Night Walker now walks alone. If you see him between here and Detroit you will not know him. His eyes will be like a dead man's when they look at you. But if Death runs along your trail the Night Walker will stop him. McKee will put peace wampum around your necks so that no one will hurt you; but you must get to Detroit before Blue Jacket's men come and say you are to go back with them.

The Indian took the cross-bow and disappeared.

"Ho, the house!" I heartily called out. "Colonel McKee, two recruits for his Majesty's service need food and clothing."

The door swung open, and we entered the darkened room. The door closed; we heard the bar fall in place. For a moment the gloom of the long, low room baffled the gaze. Then we found ourselves suspiciously scrutinized by half a dozen savages. Colonel McKee was not there.

CHAPTER IX

AS IT HAPPENED AT DETROIT

DURGIN and I remained standing inside the door, recovering from our surprize. Regaining my wits and observing the Indians were Wyandots with the exception of one man whom I put down as being a Delaware, I said—

"We are friends of Simon Girty, called Simon-ne."

I spoke in the Shawnee tongue, and the Delaware repeated it for the benefit of any who did not understand Shawnee. This same man asked:

"Why are the white men here? Have they lost something? Do they hunt for something?"

"We came to meet our friend, Colonel McKee. What do the Wyandots do here in his lodge? Where is their chief, Tarhe?"

The Delaware eyed us suspiciously for a bit, and then haughtily informed us:

"My brothers, the Wyandots of Detroit, come and go as they will. It is for them to light the fires at all councils between the tribes, to enter a lodge when they are tired; to eat from the nearest kettle when hungry. Mats and kettles are always ready for them in Weyapiersenwah's village and in this white lodge. It is our brothers on the Sandusky who follow Tarhe. The white men will eat and go back with us to Weyapiersenwah's village."

"What does he say?" broke in Durgin.

I gestured for him to be silent. To be led back to Blue Jacket's village was unthinkable. It was especially cruel to be made captives by savages who knew nothing of our former captivity and escape. And I knew it was only a matter of hours, perhaps minutes, before Spotted Snake and other Shawnees would be crossing the cultivated ground to claim us.

"We go to Detroit with a bag of talk from Weyapiersenwah to Colonel McKee," I stoutly replied. "Weyapiersenwah does not smile when his white runners find the path filled up."

"The Shawnee men live north of the Ohio because the Wyandots say they can," replied one of the Wyandots in Shawnee, and the Delaware spokesman ceased acting as interpreter. "When Weyapiersenwah sends strange white men to Detroit his warriors should go with them."

I fished out the road-belt that had protected Ogden and proffered it for the man's inspection.

"The great Shawnee keeps his warriors in the council and sends this belt of Tarhe, of the Sandusky Wyandots," I said "It will clear away the rocks and briers and make the path smooth for our feet."

This was given with an air of confidence I was far from feeling.

The man accepted the beads and examined them critically; then he demanded—

"Why does the great Shawnee war-chief send a Wyandot road-belt with his runners?"

Convinced they knew nothing of our history, I felt more assurance and explained:

"It is a good belt. We carried it from Tarhe's town to Weyapiersenwah's town. Colonel McKee was not there. We came here. He is gone. We follow him to Detroit. A Sandusky Wyandot belt will open the roads through the Wyandots of Detroit. Why should Weyapiersenwah send his own belt when the Wyandots are his brothers and this is their land? A Wyandot belt for Wyandot land is good."

He repeated my words to his fellows, and they were impressed. I was fearing the Delaware might know the truth, but his stolid face and silence told me he was arriving from Detroit and was ignorant of all that had recently happened on the Maumee. The Wyandot man handed back the belt and gravely announced:

"The road-belt of Tarhe is a good belt. Tarhe is a great chief. He is our brother. When the Detroit Wyandots meet his belt in a narrow path they step aside into the bushes and briers and let the bearer have the good walking. There is meat in the kettle, and the white men are hungry. There are blankets and soft mats to sleep on."

I was fearful of every minute lost, but it would be easy to rekindle their suspicions. I answered:

"We will eat. We slept well last night, and our legs are strong. We will not sleep here."

I explained the situation to my companion and warned him to betray no signs of haste.

So we sat cross-legged among them, heartily attacked the cooked meat and suppressed all symptoms of panic, although it seemed that my heart was continually filling my throat and preventing me from swallowing the food. The ordeal being passed, I rose and told Durgin to precede me and to walk slowly. I followed him, my back feeling cold, for I expected to be seized and hurled from the door.

"Eyes front," I lazily murmured to Durgin, fearing lest he turn and cast a frightened glance over his shoulder.

We moved from the door, and I could feel the savages watching us; but there could have been no signs of weakness in our bearing, for we entered the river-path without hindrance. As we turned a bend Durgin attempted what I had feared—to break into a run. I clapped my hand on his shoulder and held him back, muttering—

"So you would have our hair in a Wyandot smoke before we cover the first mile!"

"We're out of sight. Let's leg it!"

"Fool! We are out of sight of the trading-house. Walk natural. Do not look back. Take your knife and whittle."

He obeyed me, although his nerves were all a-jump; and when I brought him to a halt and pretended to be pointing to something across the river I caught from the corner of my eyes the face of a Wyandot, the man who had cleared the road for us, peering through the bushes. Luckily Durgin did not see him. I kept him to an ordinary pace for several miles.

At last I gave the word for the New Englander to show how fast he could run, and the next three miles were quickly covered. Halting on a low hill, we withdrew from the trail; I climbed a tree and studied the country behind us. Across the river was much fallen timber, the work of a tornado. On our side the country was more open, and in spots I could glimpse the brown path. I could discover no signs of pursuit.

We returned to the path and walked rapidly, continually fearing lest we meet

Indians bound for the Shawnee village who might not respect our belt. Did we avoid this danger by leaving the trail there was the chance that a south-bound band might notice the signs where we had sped along, and seek to learn why the runners had taken to cover.

At mid-day I took advantage of an outcropping of rock cutting across our course to swing to the right and continue our advance in a long half-circle. Game paths ran in all directions and the traveling was good. We should have reached the Great Trail before sunset, but the long detour and the frequent halts to ascertain if we were being followed allowed darkness to overtake us several miles from the mouth of the river.

Aside from Durgin's small knife we were without weapons and made the evening meal on berries. The night turned cold; we slept poorly and were glad to be up with the first light and warming our blood by rapid travel. We came in sight of the river's mouth just as the sun was rising, a huge red shield. Across was Point au Chene, and after mounting a low hill we gazed down on the lake.

Under Turkey Point a small schooner was making ready to take advantage of the slight breeze. I had planned to follow the Great Trail up the lake, but the sight of the schooner sent our legs flying down the slope. A score of Indians were camping a few rods from the shore, and several white men were busy moving the recently discharged cargo to rough shelters to await the up-river boats. They ceased their work as we ran toward them, and the Indians stretched their necks and watched us with interest.

"Put us aboard the schooner," I requested of a bearded fellow.

"Come! Come! How's this?" he growled. "Two men, nigh naked, come pounding down the hill and give off orders like a king's officer."

"We carry information to Colonel McKee. That is Matthew Elliott's boat. We have just parted from him on the Glaize. If we be naked it's because we have lived with Indians. It is Matthew Elliott's wish that we catch that boat."

"Softly! Softly!" grumbled the fellow, yet pushing a canoe into the water. "But if Cap'n Ford will have none of your rough looks you'll swim ashore. I'll not ferry you both ways."

He seized a paddle, and I took one.

They were making sail as we shot alongside. Our boatman jerked his head toward the man in the stern and muttered:

"That's Cap'n Henry Ford. Make your talk with him. If he'll have none of your company I hope you're good swimmers."

We climbed over the rail, and the canoe started for the shore. The schooner was the *Dunmore* and was active along the lake, gathering the Indian trade from Mackinack to Sandusky and delivering it to Niagara. Just now it was being kept busy delivering supplies to the Maumee. I gave Captain Ford our names and stated that our business with Colonel McKee was of the utmost importance.

His gaze was unfavorable as he took in our wretched appearance, and he coldly told us—

"I have had no word about giving you passage to Detroit."

"The need came quickly. Even Matthew Elliott could not foresee it," I truthfully told him. "If we do not sail with you we must lose time following the Great Trail."

He stroked his beard thoughtfully and cast a glance at the canoe now near the shore.

"All right," he decided. "But if any mistake has been made you'll pay for it at Detroit. If you're hungry the men forward will give you something to eat."

We were hungry and lost no time in securing some coarse bread and cold meat, the small crew eyeing us curiously but forbearing to ask questions. The schooner picked up enough wind to belly her sails, and we began slowly working around Turkey Point. Once clear of the point we would have a straightaway course to Cedar Point, passing between it and Turtle Island. But the breeze, while stitching rows of whitecaps across the blue water outside, was fitful, and the sails bellied, flapped and filled again. Durgin and I could not keep our gaze from the mouth of the Maumee. It was tantalizing to behold the briskness of the off-shore breeze beyond the point and to hear the slap and slat of the canvas as we caught an occasional gust.

"Some one coming in a hustle," muttered Durgin.

I glanced up the river. A canoe, holding one man, was entering the bay at a smart pace, the paddle being plied with great skill and rapidity. What was ominous, it was making for the *Dunmore*.

"It's Simon Girty!" cried one of the men. "I can see his gay hanker blowing around his head."

Captain Ford gave the canoe a glance; then he renewed his efforts to catch the wind. On came the renegade. The breeze freshened, and we careened to larboard and began to pick up our heels. The canoe was gliding along the starboard quarter; a man had caught the line Girty had tossed aboard. Girty seized the rail and gave a spring that yanked the line from the sailor's hand and shot the canoe away from the schooner. Girty leaped to the deck and hastened aft.

Without glancing at his frail craft, now rapidly falling astern, he faced Captain Ford and demanded:

"I want these two men. They're runaways from Blue Jacket's village."

The captain eyed him coldly, shifted the course and remarked:

"I know nothing about them. They boarded me much as you did. They ask to be carried to Detroit to see Colonel McKee."

"They're playing some game. They tricked Blue Jacket. They ran away."

I spoke up, saying: "We ran away from Wayne's army. We have news for Colonel McKee. The news will do him no good if I'm kept in an Indian village. I waited there, hoping he would come. My news is for McKee alone."

With a snort of rage Girty started to assault me, but the captain harshly ordered him back. The renegade bellowed—

"I want these two men put ashore with me."

"Take them, and good riddance," said the captain, now watching the sails.

"But my canoe is gone."

"That was your look-out. A good sailor always makes fast."

"I'll take your boat."

"No, sir!"

"Then turn back so we can land."

"No, sir! I've had enough trouble getting this wind without losing it. We're bound for Detroit. I care nothing about your trouble with these men. Colonel McKee is at Detroit. Smooth out your troubles there."

Girty was very angry but had sense enough to know Captain Ford was supreme on the *Dunmore*.

"I'll do mischief to you two sneaking liars yet," he growled, thrusting his face close to mine.

"You've had us several days! You let a Delaware kill our friend. Still, we would have stayed if your brother hadn't been so free to show his knife; and if Blue Jacket hadn't planned to roast us. When we learned that, we ran for it. Might as well stay and fight in Wayne's army as to come up here and be burned by the Shawnees or have our ears notched by Jim Girty. I'll have something to tell Colonel McKee about the way we've been treated. So none of your high and mighty with me, sir."

"—— you! You're clever. But your making-believe won't save your pelts. I saved your lives, and you've tricked me. I begin to think you're —— spies!"

"Tell that to Colonel McKee," I advised him. "You must think we're fools if we'd stay in Blue Jacket's village and hear your brother trying to buy us so he could notch our ears. And we'd have deserved burning if we hadn't tried to clear out after the chief said he would roast the two of us to drive away the bad medicine."

"Jim wouldn't 'a' touched either of you. That was only his play. The chief talked the Snake out o' the notion of roasting you. Then Ogden was killed."

"What's Ogden's death got to do with us?"

Girty was quite composed now, and my query brought a puzzled expression to his dark face. He frankly confessed:

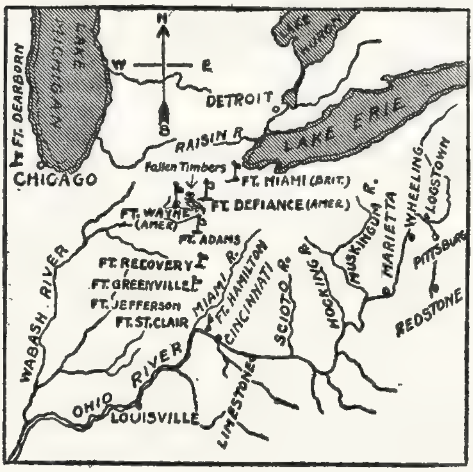
"I'm up a stump. The man was shot with an arrer, but I'm sure none of the Indians done it. And it don't seem as if either of you had the chance. But Ogden's dead. He was killed just as he was going to tell something ag'in' you two men. The war-arrer that killed him come from the chief's lodge. You two were in there. I'd 'a' blamed it on to Old Podge if the guards weren't so sure he never quit the cabin. —— and saltpeter! 'Most up to Cedar Point! Cap'n Ford, I haven't any choice. I'll go through to Detroit with these men. It'll give me a chance to stop at home for a few days."

The captain nodded and devoted his attention to negotiating the narrow passage between Cedar Point and the bar extending east from the island. As Girty went forward Durgin drew me to the rail and whispered—

"Out of the pot into the fire."

I assured him the worst of our dangers was over until we attempted the return trip. If the commandant at Detroit was inclined to be harsh there was Governor Simcoe to appeal to. We had learned during the Revolution to hate Simcoe, and yet I did not believe he was one to turn us over to red vengeance. It was Simcoe's express order that had released young Spencer from captivity in the Maumee villages earlier in the year and had restored him to his people.

Durgin and I remained at the rail, staring at the low flat land until food was served. Girty went below and remained some time. When he reappeared it was plain he had been drinking, but at this period he was not habituated to the use of liquor to the extent our border believed. When in Detroit, or at his home across the river, he went on sprees, but in the wilderness he kept a grip on himself. Perhaps this sobriety was enforced by his continual fear of falling into the hands of the Americans.



The wind dropped when we were passing the river Raisin, freshened until we reached Stony Creek and left us almost becalmed when we were opposite the mouth of the Huron. Captain Ford anchored; and it was not until morning, the breeze returning with the sun, that we picked up the voyage. I knew the country well and had to guard myself from betraying that fact to Girty.

The renegade now sought our company and was decent enough. He patiently answered Durgin's stream of eager questions. The New Englander had expected to find the Detroit River an insignificant strait and was accordingly impressed by its nine hundred yards' width and the strong current. He displayed much interest when Girty pointed out and named Celoron Island, called after Pierre Celoron, commandant at Detroit more than half a century back and better known to Americans as the Frenchman who initiated the old French-Indian War by taking possession of the Ohio Valley in 1749 in the name of Louis XV of France. Girty's suspicions were renewed, and he exclaimed accusingly:

"You've been up here before! You're playing some —— game. What do you know about Celoron?"

"Nothing, except he was the —— who led the Injuns against the Massachusetts frontier in the old days. I've heard our old men and women talk about him, but I never thought to see anything named after him."

This appeared to satisfy Girty, and he resumed the rôle of teacher.

But Grosse, or Grande, Island, nine miles long and with stout, high banks did not interest my friend as did the islet named after the Frenchman. What filled and warmed his New England heart, however, and evoked much praise from his cautious lips were the vistas of peace and comfort and plenty decorating the shores of the noble waterway.

A great change had been worked since De la Motte Cadillac came with fifty soldiers and as many laborers in 1701 to build the first fort. Before Cadillac came La Salle, a hundred and fourteen years ahead of us—the first recorded visitation of white men to that region. Other Frenchmen perhaps saw the river before him, as it is one of the phenomena of the continent's history—this fashion of the French in rapidly penetrating to the hinterland of the unexplored country.

Then, in La Salle's time, as now, the island-dotted blue water of the river was wondrously pleasing to look upon. It must have been doubly attractive after the long journey through the ancient, tragic forests. Then, as now, the meadows along the banks were fair to see, and the hills were graciously timbered.

The country reflected the French influence. The meadows were humanized by the low, white farmhouses with their sharply pitched roofs and small gable-windows. The big pear-trees and orchards of Lombardy apples, grown from seed brought from France, invited repose under their spreading branches. Tall fences, neatly made from round cedar posts, kept the cattle from the cultivated land.

The road along the bank was narrow. The old dread of an Indian attack was to be read in the compact massing of the houses and the stockades of pickets. The farms had a river frontage of three or five acres and stretched back to the primeval forests. Dwellings and fences were immaculate with whitewash, while windmills with lazy sails dotted the points and waited for a breeze. Until one heard the ruffling of drums on the parade and saw the soldiers moving about the fort it remained a land of sweet idleness.

"It's like Essex County," sighed Durgin as he gazed enraptured.

Squealing French ponies enlivened the road. Fat cattle out of bounds started a stream of Gallic oaths. On vine-covered porches neighbor shrilly called to neighbor that the *Dunmore* had returned. Thin-faced, barefooted men, clad in colored breeches and shirts and tanned to the complexion of Little Turtle's fathers, exclaimed volubly and shouted greetings to Captain Ford.

And there were pretty French girls aplenty, sparkling of gaze, very pictorial in their long and gaily colored petticoats, and very sweet in their home-made, broad-brimmed straw hats. As we glided by group after group only a biscuit-toss away Durgin lost his dour austerity and actually smirked as one vivacious young woman blew him a kiss.

Thus had the French dressed at Detroit in Cadillac's day; and thus would they dress long after my business at Cadillac's town was buried under the passing years. For they were thrifty and lived far from the changing modes. Until clothing was worn out there was no excuse for renewing it; and what the grandmothers had worn was good enough for the grandchildren.

The town had lanes for streets, with the houses closely jumbled together so as to facilitate the erection of a stockade in times of peril. Fortunately for our comfort the dry season had made the streets passable, whereas in early Spring or late Fall they would consist of clayey mud, most tenacious obstacles to foot, hoof and wheel.

The *Dunmore* anchored near the fort. As I gazed on the groups of British soldiers and Canadian militia at close range and remembered it was a scant year ago I had mingled with them, I found my spirits sinking. In Wayne's camp I optimistically had believed the absence of any beard would protect me from recognition; now I was not so sure. Durgin, who knew none of my fears, was in high feather. He was as keen to go ashore as I was loath. Girty, rather sullen from drink but none the less cunning of wit, conducted us up the bank. On my asking him where I should find the commandant (as if I did not know!) he escorted us inside the stockade and through a maze of a hundred small dwellings to Colonel Richard England's quarters.

I had met the commandant in Montreal in passing, and I was glad to find him perturbed with weighty affairs. The arrival of two deserters did not hold his interest. Had it not been that Girty was our conductor I do not believe he would have received us. As it was he questioned us very briefly and, learning what his spies already had reported, abruptly dismissed us with the warning:

"Do not leave the town. Colonel McKee is at his home across the river. He may return here any time. Your business seems to be with him."

Then to me—

"Have I ever met you before?"

"Not unless it was in the States. Not that I know of," I replied, meeting his gaze frankly while my heart beat a double-quick.

He eyed me for a moment, as if puzzled by some reminiscent resemblance, then turned to his table.

Girty escorted us from the stockade and to a wine-shop—The Vine and the Grape, kept by one Papa Marsac—and arranged for us to be fed and furnished with floor space for our blankets in the back room. He told the proprietor that Colonel McKee would settle the score. Then he warned us:

"Remember what the commandant said. You two stick here."

And with that he swung off. Durgin looked after him and muttered:

"—— his high-and-mighty ways! Giving orders to Americans on American soil!"

"Keep silent!" I said warningly, fearing lest Papa Marsac might overhear something to our undoing.

With fat hands on his hips, his head tilted, Marsac surveyed us curiously.

"Head of a keg!" he exclaimed. "They'll say Papa serves naked wild men!"

"Colonel McKee is a good paymaster. Bring us shirts and coats," I suggested.

He rubbed his chin thoughtfully; then he decided:

"For decency's sake must I do that. Honest men and women will not come in here else. They would say your place was in the Indian camp. *Messieurs*, be so good as to wait for a bit."

He disappeared into the back room and soon returned with two worn shirts of gay pattern and a pair of long breeches to replace my thigh-leggings.

"There!" he dramatically exclaimed, much as one might cry out who was paying off the States' Revolutionary War debts. "Retire to the back room and put them on. It's more than the good God has seen fit to do for you."

We put on the garments and returned to the main room, where several soldiers and gray-haired Sergeant Dance were drinking wine at a side table. By a mighty effort I restrained myself from calling the sergeant by name, for on my previous visit to Detroit I had bought him much liquor and had found him a genial soul, well-versed in the wars but child-like in his simplicity and gentle as a woman when off duty. Sergeant Dance eyed us curiously and remarked:

"These be the two men Captain Girty brought in. They were naked enough then. —— me, if Papa hasn't been dressing them up!"

"We came here well nigh naked because we were persecuted in Wayne's camp and left in a hurry."

"Steady!" muttered Dance, his rôle of sergeant resting heavily upon him. "You were stiff-necked under lawful authority. Six months under me would 'a' turned you out proper men."

"We come to serve the Crown," I added. "Colonel McKee will give us new clothes if he does not like these."

"Aye?" he muttered. "To serve the Crown is your duty, and Colonel McKee is a rare man. But to rebel against discipline is not a good sign. However, you will serve the King, and he who serves his gracious Majesty thinks naught of hardships. There's a cup of wine coming for you two. If you're McKee's men you must be our friends."

"—— my liver!" exclaimed a red-faced fellow. "But they needed friends sorely when they came ashore. They looked like two wild men."

Papa Marsac trotted forward with the wine, and as Durgin and I drank, Sergeant Dance rested his elbows on the table, cupped his chin and stared at us with a puzzled expression on his broad face. As we finished and would have moved on he detained us to say to me—

"Certes, but I've seen you, or some one who looks like your brother, some time before."

"If you ever have been in the States—" I respectfully began.

"Nay, nay. I was in the rebellion colonies. It was since then. You are new to our country?"

Durgin was breathing in anger to hear the sergeant speak of Detroit as being Crown lands. I feared he might betray us, and made haste to say—

"I never was so far north as this before."

Durgin was prompted by my words to remember our danger and with a dry chuckle exclaimed:

"It was a caution to hear him asking questions all the way up here! Kept at me as if I had lived here. It was mortal entertaining."

"You lads join the regulars, and you'll never regret it," said the sergeant, rising. "Now we must be back to the post."

In a workmanlike manner the men followed him, their heads up and eyes staring to the front. Colonel England had all but remembered me, and now a sergeant was striving to recall whom I reminded him of.

The squad had barely stepped out into the dusk when Papa Marsac invited us to partake of some roasted pigeons, white bread and coffee. It was sumptuous fare for us; only Colonel McKee's repute for being a good paymaster could reconcile the Frenchman to our appetites. Durgin especially aroused in him mingled admiration and resentment.

"By the name of a pipe!" he cried as the New Englander took a third helping. "But if *m'sieur* will be so polite to permit me, he might be a wide, deep rat-hole when it comes to filling him up."

The townspeople were no revelers, and at an early hour the floor of the backroom was at our disposal. Although the boards were hard we slept sweetly. In the morning I secured the use of Papa's razor; for I was realizing that there was an enemy in my leathern face that would shamelessly betray me. Once my stubborn beard began to show, then discovery stalked me. Each day the stubble grew changed me that much more like the bearded man Sergeant Dance had known. So I took much pains,to shave close before joining Durgin at a breakfast of eggs, coffee and fresh rolls.

SIMON GIRTY, accompanied by a tall, thin man, called as we were lounging outside. For a moment he did not recognize me, for it was the first glimpse he had had of me when I was not half-naked, disheveled and soiled with Indian paint and travel.

"You two have been smoking a peace-calumet with Papa, and he's made you quite the gentleman," he greeted us. "This man here is Joe Bill. He ain't much on powwowing, but he's all —— on eyesight. Joe will keep an eye on you. If you're what you say you be there ain't nothing to fear. If you're playing any game you'll wish you was cooking in an Ottawa kettle. Joe, these are the men."

In a high, piping voice Bill replied:

"I'm on duty. I'm watching."

And with that he commenced staring at Durgin and me with an intensity that would have been ludicrous had not the scrutiny been almost unceasing. Ordinarily a man has to wink his eyes to relieve the strain of steady staring, but Bill seemed to possess the optic qualities of a snake.

"You're leaving the village?" I asked of Girty.

"Going across to see my fambly and have a few words with Colonel McKee. He's opening a bag of talk with the American commissioners. Americans have been treated fine."

This with a sneering smile.

"Received like brothers by Governor Simcoe at Navy Hall, Niagara. Received like long lost-brothers by Matt Elliott at his home across the river, where they be now. They want to go to Roche de Bœuf, where the tribes are gathering in a high council—and they ain't even allowed to cross over here to Detroit."

And he laughed as if deeply amused. Joe Bill piped in shrilly but never removed his gaze from us. I could appreciate Durgin's feelings; for I was burning with rage myself to think of commissioners from the United States of America denied entrance to their own land and compelled to remain on Canadian soil while treating with Indians who were under British influence.

"If the commissioners make terms with the Indians don't let them fix it so me and Durgin will be turned over to Wayne's army," I pleaded.

"They won't see you if you stay here. Cap'n Ford already has refused to take them to this town or to the Maumee." *

"But if they do make peace——"

"How'n —— can they make peace when they refuse to call the Ohio River the northern boundary of the States? And the tribes won't hark to anything else. Sharp's the word, Joe Bill."

"I'm on duty. I'm watching," was the high-pitched reply.

After Girty left us to cross the river Durgin and I strolled through the village and down the narrow road south of the town. It was laughable at first to observe how literally Joe Bill kept his promise and trotted beside us and craned his long neck to stare into our faces. Durgin was the first to give way beneath the absurd espionage. He heatedly cursed Bill and told him to fall back. But Bill did not lack physical courage and stubbornly shook his head. The best we could do was to affect to ignore him. He spoiled our walk, however, and we returned to the wine-shop.

We had made Detroit, but until I could get into communication with the comissioners we might as well have stayed on the Ohio. So the next problem was to send a message to Beverly Randolph, whom I had met and who, I believed, would remember my family.

There were quite a few Indians around the fort. Many of them were Ottawas, who had promised a thousand fighting men to Blue Jacket and Little Turtle, but who could not be depended upon unless assured of rich loot. They had failed the greatest man their nation ever produced—Pontiac. I could not believe they would be a stubborn menace now the tribes were being led by Shawnee, Wyandot and Miami chiefs. The Detroit Wyandots camping outside the town were of a different class, and in them I saw Wayne's sturdiest foes.

We threw ourselves on the ground under the pear-tree, and Joe Bill took up his position facing us. We were now setting the fellow down as a half-wit, as nothing could be more senseless than his staring scrutiny. But while he was peering into our faces he

---

* A fact.

could not watch behind him. He did not see the savage who halted and pulled the blanket away from his face. I lowered my gaze so as not to betray my surprize and pleasure. Then the Night Walker was asking Bill in the Shawnee tongue—

"What white men are these?"

Bill would not turn his head and contented himself with saying—

"Don't talk Injun if you're talking to me."

"He has only white talk in his bag," I explained to the Chickasaw. "Simon-ne left him to watch us. He has the eyes of a hawk."

"Hawks sleep."

"What's he saying?" demanded Bill, but never removing his gaze from me.

"He wants to know who we are. I am telling him to talk to Simon Girty."

Then to the Chickasaw—

"You traveled fast."

"Over the Great Trail to overtake you. The path was smooth. There was one rock in the path. An Ottawa asked for my belts. He was a foolish man."

"Three men from the Thirteen Fires are across the river. They open a big bag of talk for the tribes. I must get a talk to one of them. He is called Randolph. Do you remember the name?"

"White names mean no more than numbers. The Night Walker remembers the name. Have your talk ready. The Night Walker crosses tonight or tomorrow."

He wheeled and walked toward the Indian camp. I had solved the problem of sending a message provided I could overcome the intermediate obstacle of eluding Joe Bill long enough to write a few lines. If he reported to Girty I had been writing, the renegade would demand to see the paper. I thought of a way to nullify the danger of even that bit of knowledge, but if possible I intended to frame my message unobserved. I whispered a few words to Durgin, who nodded his head. Ever suspicious, Joe Bill warned us:

"I'm on duty. I'm watching."

"Then watch this," cheerily invited Durgin, producing his small knife and picking up a broken limb of pine and beginning to carve it rapidly. "Watching my old face is poor work. But this is something pretty; something that'll make you laugh."

He kept talking in this strain and soon had fashioned one of his wooden darts; with a snap of his wrist he shot it soaring toward the Indian camp. For once Joe Bill's attention was distracted from me. He shouted gleefully, like a small boy, and raced after Durgin to get the dart. I slipped inside the wine-shop and asked Papa Marsac to furnish me with writing material so that I could pen a note to Colonel McKee.

Papa was in Girty's confidence and must have received his orders from the renegade. He hovered about as I wrote, but he could not see that I wrote two messages on the one sheet. In the one addressed to McKee and signed with both our names, I requested an early interview and urged the advancement of some money or else an immediate appointment to his department at day wages, as we were penniless and dependent on charity or chance.

In the other I impressed on Mr. Randolph the need of secrecy and briefly explained our situation and my business in the North. I urged him to send word by the Chickasaw, if I was unable to be present, when the council arrived at a decision. Then I rejoined Durgin and Bill. The latter was so taken up with Durgin's tricks, and the New Englander was so quick to vary his program, shifting from the dart to a piece of string, that I doubted if my absence had been observed.

That day and night passed without incident, but early in the morning Girty was in the back room, arousing us from sleep and demanding to see the writing. I sleepily found it and handed it over, but not being able to read he was as bad off as ever. Leaving Joe Bill on guard in the wine-shop, he went out in search of Sergeant Dance. When he returned his bearing was much improved, and he offered to deliver the note for me. I expressed my appreciation and insisted that our position was, to say the least, embarrassing as long as our pockets were empty.

"No one asked you to come here," he reminded us. "You've got rations and sleeping-quarters. That ought to satisfy you. If Colonel McKee wants to fill your pockets with hard money, that's his business. I know I can't afford to do it on two dollars a day."

He went away, presumably to cross the river again, and we ate our breakfast. Papa Marsac hinted that some line, which might be construed as a pledge, would be very acceptable from McKee because of Durgin's appetite. I was still fencing against the suggestion when I backed from the front shop and received a shock.

Spotted Snake and other Shawnee warriors were under the big pear-tree. Their attitude was that of waiting, but after seeing us they made no sign of recognition and made for the Indian camp. James Girty, accompanied by Shawnee Betsy, now came up and proceeded to question us sharply. Receiving the same explanation we had given Simon and being powerless to use his knife, he grinned like a wolf and said—

"You left too many dead Injuns behind to suit Blue Jacket."

"We left no dead Indians," I contradicted him hotly.

"What about the two found down the river? Big Bear and Tall Man?"

"First I heard of them being dead. We killed no Indians. Couldn't have done it if we wanted to. We had no weapons."

"Big Bear was held under the water until he drowned. Took two strong men to do that."

And still grinning evilly he passed, his red wife trotting at his heels. Some minutes after they had passed the Pleiss woman, dragging Simon-ne, the little Indian boy, came along. On beholding Durgin Shawnee Betsy's spoiled son broke loose and ran to him. The Pleiss woman recaptured him and had time to whisper:

"Oh, mister! Git away! Git away! The Injuns and Girty have come to take you back to the Injun village."

Then James Girty was bawling out for her to hurry along, and she left us, Simon-ne making a rare fight to get loose again. Joe Bill had witnessed the woman's hurried communication but had not overheard it. Now he crowded between Durgin and me and alternately darted his inquisitive gaze at one, then at the other.

We walked toward the Indian camp and halted when we saw Spotted Snake and the two Girtys conversing. A savage covered with a blanket brushed by us and nudged me significantly. I whispered to Durgin, who forged ahead with Bill at his heels. The Night Walker repassed me and received my message.

"Randolph is the name," I murmured.

He bowed his head and drew his blanket closer.

Satisfied that the Chickasaw would deliver my message at the earliest opportunity, there remained nothing for Durgin and me to do but wait for the word from Commissioner Randolph, and while waiting frustrate Spotted Snake's scheme to have us returned to Blue Jacket's village. My first move to block this danger was to order Joe Bill to lead me to the fort, where after some difficulty I secured an audience with Colonel England. I explained Spotted Snake's purpose and protested against being turned over to the Shawnees.

"I have no time to bother with your affairs," he harshly told me. "By your own tell you're two deserters and ought to be hung. However, Colonel McKee will have charge of your case. When he learns two Shawnees were killed on the Maumee, presumably by you two men, he will not like it."

"We killed no Indians," I retorted. "And it's bad business for white men to send white men to the Shawnee torture, even if they did quit the American Legion to fight for the king."

"There will be no torture," he declared. "James Girty has been here, and I have washed my hands of the matter. If you're sent back it will be after Blue Jacket has given belts for your safety."

Then we were peremptorily dismissed.

I could feel the climax crowding in upon us. Ordinarily time tiptoes swiftly by when one walks toward a great danger; but never did a day seem longer in wearing itself out than that day in Detroit, with Girty gone to get the decisive word from McKee, with the Night Walker over the river to deliver my note to Beverly Randolph. We walked the village; we drank a moderate supply of the light wine. For once we were almost oblivious to Joe Bill's obtruding presence.

Night came, and more Indians entered the town. These newcomers arrived from across the river. Something momentous had happened or was about to happen, for there was much dancing and singing in the Indian camp. Some Ottawas, possessed of rum or brandy, raced naked by the wine-shop, screaming—

"Kill all the Big Knives!"

Papa Marsac's front room did a rushing business; the villagers gathered to talk over the situation. We heard many rumors which we ignored, but out of the gist of the talk two facts were patent: Many of the last delegation of Indians to confer with the commissioners had recrossed the river and would shortly start for the Maumee; inside of a day or so it would be decided if we were to have a general war or peace.

Officers from the fort stepped in and had their strong liquors. One flushed-faced young ensign cried out: "By ——, gentlemen! It's settled! The Yankees refuse to move their boundary south to the Ohio. The Indians will surely fight!"

At last the villagers returned to their whitewashed cottages, and the men from the fort returned to their quarters. The back room was clear, and Durgin and I prepared to spread our blankets, leaving the Frenchman to count up the evening receipts. We had been in the back room only a few minutes when I heard Papa exclaim:

"Name of a snake! But *m'sieur* moves as softly as a shadow! Let *m'sieur* beware before he craves my few shillings. I am armed."

"Have done your nonsense, fool," replied a hard, metallic voice, "and give me some wine and bread and cheese. Here is money to pay. I have just arrived in your town. In other times you were quick enough to know me."

There was a pause and silence for a few moments; then Papa Marsac was exclaiming:

"Death of the ——! You, *m'sieur!* And old Papa feared you were dead. Welcome, heart of my heart! *M'sieur* always had the dashing way, but his good money always flowed freely between his fingers. You shall have food and the best of my wine. For sleep there is the back room with two deserters from M'sieur Wayne's army using part of the floor. I will bring extra blankets so you shall sleep soft. That is right, *m'sieur*. Remove the handkerchief from your head, for the night is warm. Rest and compose—*Nom de Dieu!* But that is quaint—the mark on *m'sieur's* head. The wound is fresh. Were the Indians cruel to *m'sieur?*"

Before the muttered curse, returned for an answer, had been finished I had the door open a crack. The light from the candle fell on a livid "D" disfiguring the newcomer's forehead. I stepped noiselessly back, seized Durgin by the arm and urged him to a narrow rear door that opened into a small garden. His stubborn New England disposition impelled him to hold back a bit until he could learn what was prompting our flight. But he moved rapidly enough when I whispered in his ear:

"It's the man Quain. He'll be in here in a second."

CHAPTER X

BLUE JACKET SENDS BELTS

WE STOOD in the darkness outside the window. As on that other occasion we gazed into a lighted room and watched Quain, renegade and river pirate, moving about light of foot. He had discarded all but thigh-leggings and a broad breech-clout, had daubed his chest and face with paint and had cropped his hair to the skin except for a ragged scalp-lock. There was a smear of vermilion on his forehead, as though he had attempted to cover up the deserter's brand, but the red outline of the damning letter remained conspicuous. He saw our blankets and glanced inquiringly about the room.

"S'pose he must die?" whispered Durgin, his hand trembling as it grasped my arm.

"As surely as he murdered that poor wanderer in his trading-house on the Ohio."

"Then let's go in and have it over with. But it's an awful business," said Durgin.

"It must be done quietly and without any one knowing who did it," I warned him.

"Oughter be done before he gits a chance to see us and tell what he knows about us," amended Durgin. "It's a dreadful business, but so long as it must be done let's make what profit we can out of it."

"Patience. He has no suspicion we are in Detroit."

"Ha! Guess we've missed our chance. He's going back to the front room," whispered the New Englander.

"If he leaves the shop we will dog him and get him. If he stays in the shop we will get him. He's trapped. But it will be better to finish it here."

Back of us in a tangled a growth of uncut grass was an old cistern partly filled with rubbish. We had commented upon it the day before when discussing the possible need of a hiding-place did we decide to escape from the town. It had impressed us as an excellent cover if we were forced to wait a few hours for darkness.

The murmur of Papa Marsac's suave

voice and the growling tones of Quain's reply came to me indistinctly. But Durgin, who was now close to the small window, whispered:

"Asking where the back-room lodgers are. Papa is trying to smooth him down."

"Go out front by the pear-tree and see he does not get away. If he returns to this room you call Marsac outdoors. Call softly. Do not let him see you. When he starts to leave the shop you run back here. Very softly. If he is out front he will not hear the sound of the struggle. Quain must drop out of sight quietly. Move quickly."

Durgin vanished around the corner of the building, and I began casting about for a club. Aside from the tall grass, left growing to hide the ugly cistern-opening, the garden was trim. My hands found nothing. Quain had a rifle, a knife and an ax. I opened the door a crack and watched him reenter the room. He stood the rifle in the corner and kneeled to undo his blanket-roll. I pressed my lips to the narrow opening and softly called:

"Quain! Quain! Step out here a minute."

He leaped to his feet and glared at the door. I backed away. Moving so softly that I did not hear him, he showed his face at the small window for a second; then he was at the door. I heard the door creak as he opened it enough to thrust out his head.

"Who's out there that knows me?" he demanded, yet keeping his voice down.

I had to answer something or attack him in the lighted room. All I could think to say was—

"Ogden."

To my great relief the name did not surprize him, proving he had left Tarhe's village on the Sandusky before Blue Jacket's runner had delivered the news of Ogden's death. He threw the door open and called out:

"—— you! Why didn't you fetch word to me on the Sandusky like you was told? It's high time you showed up. What made you come up here 'stead of coming back to Tarhe's village? Come in here, you —— skulker."

"I dassent. Not yet, anyway. Girty's mad at me. You must fix it up."

"I said for you to come in here. I'll learn you to go wanderin' round while on my business."

"I'm scared of you," I faintly cried. "You promised you'd use me well if I'd help you git free."

"Come here!" he repeated fiercely.

"Not to the light! It's Girty I'm scared of most. But you fix it up for me. Promise to, and I'll tell something he said about you."

"If Simon Girty or Jim Girty has made any talk about me they'll answer to me. I know 'em. I ain't scared of the whole tribe."

And with a string of oaths he stepped from the door.

"Well, where'n —— be you?" he snarled.

"Here," I softly called, backing toward the cistern. "I don't want Marsac to see me yet. Not till you've softened Girty down."

Grumbling and growling, he closed the door behind him and blundered to where I was standing waist-high in the grass.

"Spit it out mighty lively," he ordered, standing within two feet of me. "I ain't scared of all the Girtys north the Ohio; but if you've got 'em against you, you'd better jump into the river and forgit to come up."

"It's all along of Jim Girty more'n Simon," I whined, edging closer.

"What did they say about me? After hearing that I'll know if I want to save your hide. Huh! You look too —— tall for Ogden—" he began, stepping back.

But now it was all or nothing. I leaped upon him, bowling him to the ground, my left hand trying to find his throat, my right fumbling at his belt.

"By ——! A trap!" he choked. "You skunk, you got the guts to tackle me?"

"One of us must die," I muttered, speaking my thought aloud rather than addressing him.

He became silent and displayed his wares as a fighting man. His right hand attempted to loosen my grip on his throat. His left hand went after the long knife and instantly became pinned between our two bodies, for the knife hung over his right hip. He was a murderer, but no coward.

Gripping my left wrist so as to lessen the pressure of my fingers, he struggled with all his might and cunning to work his hand across and to the knife-haft. I defeated this effort by keeping my legs locked about his and pressing my weight against his right side. And all the time I was trying to find the ax, which should have been on his left hip.

Suddenly he wrenched his left hand loose, and before I could cease fumbling for the ax and grab his wrist he had jabbed two stiff fingers into my face, hitting me on the cheek-bone instead of the eyes. I butted my head into his face and made one more frantic effort to secure the ax.

His left hand flew to join his right, and with a wrench he tore my hand from his throat. Instantly I had both his wrists firmly gripped and began straightening his arms above his head.

He gave a convulsive twist and rolled me over. My left and his right flew to the knife at the same instant and become locked in a finger-crushing clutch. This shift in position destroyed his balance, and without much difficulty I whirled him on his back. He exerted all his strength to continue our momentum, and, not daring to unlock my legs, I accommodated him, thinking to make it a double revolution and thereby bring myself uppermost as his effort passed the maximum.

Over we rolled two or more times; he was underneath when we reached the edge of the opening. He was the first to sense our position. He started to cry out as we whirled into the twelve-foot drop, and that we turned in midair was proved by his being underneath when we struck the rubbish. The impact of my heavy frame on his should have knocked the wind from his lungs. As it was, I barely beat his hand to the knife.

I thrust blindly in the darkness and slightly cut the back of my hand as it gripped his throat. Leaping up and backward and striking against the cistern wall, I lunged forward, striving to reach him, but he remained as he fell. The toe of my moccasin touched his leg. He twitched about a bit, and I began to realize he was making strange choking noises. He made no move to get up. I waited, fearing some trick.

Then I kneeled on his feet, and with the knife held ready I gingerly extended my right hand until it rested on his chest. Shifting it to the fifth rib, I pressed hard. The pounding heart had run down. He was dead, and I was amazed to find it all finished there in the blackness, with luck deciding the issue. I dropped the knife and explored the cistern wall. The wall had broken away in one place, and by considerable exertion I managed to crawl to the top.

It was amazing to find the night so quiet and undisturbed by our deadly encounter. Between me and the faint light from the back window moved a figure.

"O Lord, of great mercy!" groaned a familiar voice.

I called out for my friend to be quiet and to come to me. It seemed as if the struggle had lasted hours, whereas it commenced and ended during the brief space of time it took Durgin to run out to the pear-tree and to act the decoy.

He found me, his hands fluttering and shaking as he ran them over me.

"Quain is dead," I panted. "Down in the cistern— Thought it would never end."

"Land of Judah! Quick as this? Ain't been gone long enough for you two to say 'How'd ye do!' " he gasped.

"He's dead. We must get into the light and remove any signs of the fight. I've cut my hand a bit. My shirt's torn off my back."

Without a word he seized my hand. He helped me to my feet, led me up to the window and turned me about.

"Two red spots on your face. Rub some taller from the candle into the cut on your hand and make it look like an old scratch. Must do something about the shirt. Looks like a wild-cat had been combing you."

Then with a flash of rage: "But —— your hide! Why'd you send me out front so's you could have the fighting all to yourself?"

He flattered me, and I tried to tell him so, but his mood continued to be peevish. He curtly directed me to enter the back room and roll up in my blanket. We entered softly. There was no sound of Papa Marsac in the front room.

"Give me that shirt. I must hide it and try to find you another," whispered Durgin.

My heart was still racing, but my wits began to clear. Quain's blanket-roll lay where he had dropped it. I requested Durgin to stand at the door and watch for Papa Marsac's return. As he took his station I opened the roll and found several shirts and other gear. I took one shirt that was well-worn and similar to mine in pattern, and a sheath-knife. Tying the roll, I gave it to Durgin, with my shirt and the dead man's rifle, and directed him:

"Toss them into the cistern. Until he's found, Marsac will think he passed out the back door to spend the night elsewhere. Did Papa see you or know it was you calling him?"

"Never see hide nor hair of me. Kept asking who it was. Once he got well-started for the tree I slipped back to find you'd hogged the fracas."

"Be spry. You must be here if Papa looks in. We haven't seen Quain. We walked out the back door toward the river and smoked a pipe."

Durgin was soon back, and we took to our blankets. We heard Papa enter the shop. I closed my eyes when he opened the door and held the candle above his head. I pretended to awake, blinked stupidly at him and asked—

"What is the matter?"

"Head of a bird! How should I know?" he querulously replied. "I send a man in here to share the floor with *messieurs*, my guests. I hear a voice in the night calling my name. I come here and find he is gone."

"I'm glad he's gone," I growled. "The floor is hard enough without having more to share it."

"——! So is Papa Marsac glad he and his beastly temper are gone! But why does he make a mystery of his going? Why did he call to me to join him under the tree and then steal away without seeing me?"

"Papa Marsac, you are the prince of wine-shopkeepers, but I am sleepy and you tire me. I advise you to look to your strong-box and see if your strange guest has helped himself."

"Oh, M'sieur Quain would not do that—to me. But did he have no words for *messieurs* when he passed through this room?"

I briefly explained that Durgin and I had been outside, smoking, and had seen nothing of the stranger. Papa was puzzled and disturbed; not at his guest's departure but because of the voice calling him to come to the pear-tree.

"I will look at my strong-box," he mumbled.

He scurried away and of course found his money intact. He disturbed us no more that night.

In the light of the morning I examined myself closely, as did Durgin. There was nothing to indicate a struggle except the slight cut on my hand, and Durgin soon disguised it with tallow. I hoped Papa would not notice the shirt. Fortunately the front room began doing a rushing business once it opened, and Papa had no time to waste on the penniless.

We went out front, and Durgin entered the shop, gobbled his breakfast and secured some rolls, which I ate in the garden. Aside from the tall grass being beaten down where we had rolled into the cistern there was no sign of the fight. Did an Indian or a woodsman enter the garden he would instantly notice the flattened grass and quickly discover what was in the cistern. I did not care to be present when the alarm was sounded. We returned to the tree, and Durgin informed me—

"Men from the fort inside was saying that the tribes are hankering for a fight with Wayne's army."

I knew something had happened overnight to fill the wine-shop at such an early hour. Not only were the garrison officers more in evidence, but there appeared to be more of the Canadian militia. From the yowling and dancing in the Indian camp I assumed the savages were greatly excited. We saw Joe Bill anxiously searching for us through the shifting groups of customers in the shop, and when he appeared in the doorway Durgin called to him. His relief was great on beholding us, and when he joined us his first words were:

"I'm on duty. I'm watching."

Forthwith he commenced his wide-eyed staring from one to the other of us.

We lounged on the grass and smoked, each fearful lest a sudden cry announce the gruesome discovery. An hour passed with arrivals and departures keeping Papa's trade at the top notch. Then Simon Girty came along. He was in a hurry, like a man intent on big affairs. He barely glanced at us as he entered the shop. In a few minutes he came out, his face betraying deep annoyance. Joining us he harshly demanded—

"Either of you see a man last night or this morning who had a 'D' burnt on his forehead?"

"Mercy land! Why'd they burn him for?" gasped Durgin.

"For the same reason they'll burn the letter 'D' on our heads if they catch us," I grimly warned him.

Then to Girty—

"We saw no such man."

"He was in the shop last night. Marsac sent him to the back room, but he didn't stop there."

"He didn't come into the room while we were there," said Durgin. "Such a hullabaloo in the front shop that we went outside where there was more room and quiet."

"We weren't gone very long," I added. "Your man must have passed right through."

"Prob'ly got drunk," suggested the New Englander.

"He ain't the kind that shows his liquor," growled Girty. "The —— fool came here to meet me. If he comes along you'll know him by the brand on his forehead. He'll answer to the name of Quain. Tell him for me he's to stick here till I come. Joe Bill has good eyes but not much of a memory."

"I'm on duty. I'm watching," proudly spoke up Bill.

"Did you give McKee my message? What about some money? Makes it tough not to have a shilling."

"You'll git McKee's answer soon enough."

His answer sounded sinister. I continued:

"How's the council going on? Yankee commissioners given in yet?"

He smiled contentedly and for the time forgot his chagrin at missing Quain.

"They're stiff-necked. They have their orders," he replied. "There's a big fight coming. I've raised —— enough to make it a general war. The tribes will surely fight if the Americans don't stop planting corn north of the Ohio."

"Good! Then we won't have to go back to Wayne's army."

His gaze impressed me as being very sardonic as he assured us:

"No. You two won't go back to Wayne's army."

And away he went.

"—— him! That sounded mighty mean and nasty," muttered Durgin.

SPOTTED SNAKE and a dozen Shawnees, painted and feathered for war, came up. This time they halted and stared at us. I told the Snake:

"We left Weyapiersenwah's village to save our lives. We would have stayed there if we had been treated like brothers."

"The white men are very brave and very strong. Only very strong men could hold Big Bear under water," he gravely told me.

"We did not kill the Bear."

"At night there is a moon in the sky and one in the water. When the white men take a stick and fish the moon out of the water the Shawnees will believe the white man's tongue is straight."

With that he left us, followed by the warriors.

I repeated his last speech to Durgin, who remarked:

"Almost the same as calling us liars. Funny part of it is you was telling the truth."

"Girty has seen McKee. I wish I knew what McKee said about us," I mused.

"Oh, Lawd! I hate this place! I hate this waiting for something bad to happen," complained my friend under his breath. "They looked us over just as if they was trying to guess which one would stand the fire the longest."

I knew just how he felt, for never had I been in such an itch to travel, to be running away. Yet I endeavored to quiet his fears by declaring:

"We're perfectly safe here. At the worst we'll only be held here as prisoners. But once we get the word from the commissioners we'll leave fast enough. Let's stretch our legs."

He tugged at my arm and jerked his head. The Spotted Snake and his warriors were returning, only this time they pretended not to see us. Each man was carrying a new gun, powder-horn and bullet-pouch. The Snake was wearing a richly laced coat. The British agents were again lavishly distributing gifts. Behind the Shawnees came James Girty and a mixed band of Detroit Wyandots and Delawares. And these savages bore new weapons and had silver on their brawny arms, and medallions and medals hung around their necks.

Ottawas too, ferocious in mien and hideous with paint, swarmed by, each man carrying his gifts to the Indian camp. Shawnee Betsy, lugging a large bundle of gifts tied up in a new blanket, passed us without a glance. Behind her pranced Simon-ne, her son. He was brandishing a toy sword and experiencing great delight in jabbing it at the legs of those he met. Bringing up the rear of the straggling procession was the Pleiss woman. She was carrying a very large bundle.

On beholding us she rolled her eyes as if in great despair. When abreast of us she let the bundle fall to the ground, and a quantity of different-colored beads escaped from the rolls of new cloth. Motioning

Durgin to stay back, I darted forward and helped pick up the beads and replace them in the bundle. Then I knotted the corners of the blanket more securely. As I worked she was muttering:

"I dropped it a-purpose, mister! For God's sake go! Be killed fighting! Git drowned in the river. You're to be sent back. They've promised you sha'n't be hurt, but——"

A Shawnee man halted and glared suspiciously at her. I picked up the bundle and placed it in her arms; she tottered away. I disliked adding to Durgin's fears, but it was right he should know the worst. So I told him, mumbling my words that Joe Bill might not overhear. And I added:

"This night we'll cross the river and throw ourselves on the protection of the commissioners. They may dare take us by force, but I do not believe it. What happens here on American soil can be covered up. But they'll go slow on Canadian soil and in the presence of our commissioners."

"Marietty was a fair place to look on," sighed Durgin. "If not for their way of voting folks down I could 'a' been happy there."

And the far-away look in his gaze prompted the suspicion he was thinking of Thankful-for-Blessings Perkins and her demure prettiness.

"First sight I got of this country up here I thought it must be the Garden of Eden. Now it's full of snakes. It's a derned delusion and a snare. Let's try the river now while the folks are too busy gabbing to notice what we're doing."

As it would be the last move they would expect us to make I was finding much merit in the plan. Then human voices exploded in a shout behind the wine-shop. The outcry, as if made at a given signal, cut through the haphazard din and general confusion of the noisy wine-shop. It was more like the unexpected volley of muskets fired from ambush. So compelling was this staccato outburst that those in and outside the shop ceased talking and stared wonderingly.

Durgin was quicker of wits than I. Before I could analyze the situation he was fiercely whispering—

"Found!"

He wiped his forehead on his sleeve and groaned—

"Lord, but I'd love to be in Marietty this very minute!"

The yelling voices now took on speech. The mass of volume disintegrated, and fragments of sentences could be picked out. Exclamations streamed through the back door into the front shop.

"Dead man!"

"Man dead in the cistern!"

"Man with his throat cut!"

These condensed explanations were caught up and repeated in a gruesome chorus. The finding of a hidden body of a man killed by violence inspires terror. There is something awful in such an accidental discovery. Perhaps it is the mystery behind it that makes the onlookers glance apprehensively about as if fearing the same dire agency might blot them out of existence even in broad daylight.

Those who did not run from the cistern through the rear door of Papa Marsac's shop came streaming around the building as if fleeing from a deadly peril. These, like their fellows in the shop, kept repeating over and over that a dead man had been found hidden in the cistern. Men standing side by side would say it over and over to each other, speaking abruptly and in few words. Such would ignore the excited pleadings of citizens who had not been in the garden. This confusion and excitement afforded us time to secure a grip on ourselves, and I warned Durgin not to betray us by word or look.

"Even if it's found there's nothing to show a tumble in the dark didn't cause him to fall and land on his own knife," I whispered.

"They can't prove nothing on us," he muttered. "But I wish we was across the river."

Papa Marsac erupted from the door, a towel in one hand, a jug in the other, his black eyes staring and as lifeless as dried ink, his mouth open to sound a howl. If he did cry out I did not hear him. He ran as if chased by the evil one, yet tenaciously gripping his towel and jug. Then men poured from the shop, looking back at other men who were carrying a heavy burden on a stretcher of two rifles and a blanket.

They came toward the pear-tree, and Durgin made a hissing noise with his breathing. Behind the stretcher came men carrying the blanket-roll, the rifle and the knife. The fellow bearing the latter held the long blade upright before him, his eyes glaring at the tip as if he were bewitched. Durgin was masterly in recovering his bearing. He did not wait for the men to reach the tree but ran to meet them.

Then he returned at the head of the double file of men and shouted to me:

"What do you think! They found a dead man in an old dry well somewhere back of the shop! Must 'a' fell in the dark and stuck his knife through his gizzard! I say such traps oughter be filled in or covered. We're like dry grass cast into the oven. Poor critter! Full of life and hope one minute! Dead in an old well the next!"

But when they deposited the stretcher under the tree and I glimpsed the savage extent of the mortal wound I knew none would believe he had met an accidental death, dying by his own hand as the result of a fall. A furtive survey of the gathering crowd did not, however, reveal any animosity toward Durgin and me. The citizens as yet had not had time to form suspicions. One and all were horrified and could only comprehend the single fact that a man had died by violence in their very midst and had been hidden close by the popular drinking-place. Had he been killed in a fight nothing would have been thought of it. But homicide accompanied by stealth and shrouded in mystery is a threat against every one in a community.

Some one had overtaken Papa Marsac and was bringing him back, for I could hear him refusing to look on the dead man.

"Name of life, *m'sieur!* You do not understand my words," he bleated. "As the good God is my judge it makes me ill to look on such sights!"

"Come along!" thundered his escort, and the back of my neck and my wrists developed goose-flesh. However, I believe my bearing was composed as I wheeled about and called out to Simon Girty:

"They've found a dead man in the old cistern. There's a brand on his forehead. I'm afraid it's the man you were asking for. They think he fell on his knife in the dark."

"No, no! The man was murdered," insisted one of the bearers. "He never got cut up like that by falling on his knife."

"And why should he be walking alone about the garden in the dark with a knife in his hand?" asked another.

"Maybe the Frenchman did for him," some one yelled.

Girty forced a passage through the inner circle of men, pushing Papa Marsac before him. Marsac fairly shrieked:

"On my soul's salvation, no! I have harmed no man."

Girty grabbed him by the neck and made him gaze down on the convulsed face. With a whimpering cry Papa held his arm across his eyes and moaned:

"It is he of the branded head. He came to my place last night. He has been there before, but his head wasn't marked till last night. I am honest, as God is my witness! He had nothing worth stealing. He drank my wine. He wanted a place to sleep. I knew he was M'sieur Girty's friend. I could offer him the back room. He was pleased to accept. He passed into the back room.

"Then soon he was out front—right here. He called me to come to him. I came. Behold! He was not here. I waited and waited. Then I went back to my shop. Those two others—" pointing at Durgin and me—"were asleep. But not only was M'sieur Quain gone, but his blankets and rifle were gone. What could I do but believe he had sought other quarters? May I be turned into a dead pig if this is not the truth!"

"You say he called you to come out to this tree, but wasn't here when you came?" asked Girty, and his countenance was disagreeable to see as he endeavored to suppress his rage so that he might investigate intelligently. "Didn't you see him standing here?"

"But, no, M'sieur Girty. I heard a voice——"

"—— your ears! How do you know it was his voice?" broke in Girty.

"But, *m'sieur*, have reason and patience, I beg of you. I knew nothing. Let *m'sieur* have the goodness to remember no one was missing from the shop but M'sieur Quain. All my customers had left. Who else but M'sieur Quain could call me by name?"

"Be very careful," warned Girty. "These American deserters were not in the back room when Quain passed through it. They have told me they were outside, smoking."

And the renegade slowly swept his gaze over Durgin and me.

"In the name of Our Lady I am innocent of intent to deceive!" cried Papa. "There is something I have forgotten till now. The horror is so great! The sorrow in my heart——"

"What have you not told?" thundered Girty.

"Only this, *m'sieur*. I recall that M'sieur Quain entered the back room and in a few moments came to the door and asked where were the two men I had told him would share the room with him."

"Just as I said," I spoke up. "That's why we didn't see him. He left by the back door while my friend and I were outside smoking."

"While either you or your friend was out front calling to this old fool to come to this tree!" slowly declared Girty in a voice that creaked and croaked.

Then spitting like a gigantic snake, his upper lip wrinkling back and showing his teeth, he thrust a finger at me and hoarsely whispered:

"So that's it! You were near by when Ogden came to tell me something—and he was killed just as he was ready to talk. You ran away to Detroit. My friend comes here to tell me something, but meets you—and he was killed before he could speak. By ——! If you don't dance many a long hour on red coals, then Simon Girty's Wyandots have forgotten how to keep a slow fire going!"

Now the worst had come I was braced to meet it.

"You talk like a crazy man," I loudly scoffed. "You didn't help Crawford when they roasted him, and you've helped to roast other white men. But you'll turn no white men into the fire here in Detroit. We came north to serve his gracious Majesty, not to be burned by your red friends. We've been free to enter and leave the wine-shop when we would or to walk about the town. We were not in the back room when that unfortunate man entered it. Papa Marsac has testified to that. Nor was he there when my friend and I returned and went to sleep. Why should we kill the man? It's fool talk you've made because you're seeing red."

Girty was licking his lips and trying to speak. One of the discovery party spoke up, saying—

"The grass is all trompled down round the cistern, like there'd been a big tussle."

"Yes," gasped Girty, still trying to moisten his dry lips. "Quain would never die like a sheep. It took two men to kill him."

Papa Marsac timidly broke in, asking—

"Did either of the *messieurs* call for me to come to this pear-tree?"

Girty answered him, saying: "That's what happened. One of these two got you out here. While you was mooning around and couldn't hear anything these two fellers was butchering my friend in the garden." Then to me: "It's all plain enough now. But I'll guarantee you'll pay for it! I'll guarantee you'll burn long enough to cover his bones! And I'll guarantee that after fifteen minutes in the Indian camp you'll talk mighty pert and tell just how you did it!"

"Guarantee and be ——!" Durgin told him. "There's enough decent people in Detroit to stop you from doing your ——'s work on us two innercent men!"

"Here come some soldiers!" I cried. "We'll appeal to them to take us to the fort or to set us across the river under the protection of Colonel McKee. We'll not be tortured in the Indian camp just to please you."

"By ——! I've said you'll burn, and burn you will! And I'll mark you so's every one will know you're my meat!" howled the renegade, now giving loose rein to his passion and reaching for his knife.

But Sergeant Dance and a file of redcoats were now intervening, and the sergeant was saying:

"Captain Girty, I must take these men away from here. I am acting under orders of Colonel England."

"How does Colonel England come to interfere with my department?" choked Girty.

"At the request of your superior officer, sir. Colonel McKee asks him to remove these men."

"Where do you take them to??

"To the *Dunmore*, sir. They are to be returned to the Maumee."

I was not conscious of breathing, of saying anything or of hearing any word spoken for a long time. Then Durgin's voice penetrated my stupid bewilderment by crying—

"I'd rather stay here and face a trial for killing this dead man!"

The rage distorting Girty's face began to break up as he realized the meaning of the sergeant's words. His expression slowly changed to one of incredulity, then to open rejoicing and savage exultation.

"By ——! That's good!" he finally cried.

"I'll stand trial for murder here in Detroit!" repeated Durgin.

"The Shawnee warrior, Spotted Snake, has handed over Blue Jacket's belts and will take you two men back with him," the sergeant gravely informed him.

"You mean it? That an English officer will turn us over to those ——s to torture?" I gasped.

"An English officer is always a gentleman, sir," the sergeant sternly reminded me. "You are deserters. You have no country. Still the Crown does not intend you shall be harshly treated. I have already said belts have been given against your being ill-treated."

Ill-treated! No wonder Girty chuckled and was so intensely amused that he closed his eyes. I told Sergeant Dance, pointing meanwhile at Girty:

"Look at that man. You heard his threats. You know we'll be burned just as surely as they burned Crawford. Their belts mean nothing. They will say we escaped, that they do not know what became of us. Or that some young men of another tribe stole us away and killed us. If we go up the Maumee we shall never be seen in any white settlement again. Take me to the fort so I can have a word with Colonel England."

His honest face was worried under my vehemence, but he could only reply:

"I have my orders. You must go aboard at once. But you will not be harmed. Belts have been given to Colonel McKee. Even Blue Jacket would hesitate to break a promise made in wampum to our British Indian agent."

"That old cuss may hesitate, but that's about all," cried Durgin.

"Of course you won't be hurt," Girty mocked.

Durgin for the third time persisted—

"Why ain't we held here and tried for killing this man?"

And he pointed down to Quain.

"Because you never killed him," promptly declared Girty, leering cunningly at me. "Because that game won't work."

Sergeant Dance sternly said:

"I have my orders. You go aboard at once. If you are wanted for any crime committed in Detroit the commandant will know where to find you. The belts have been accepted. You must go. You will not be hurt."

"And just to make sure you're treated gentle I'm going along with you," declared Girty.

But he was not to have it all his own way, for Sergeant Dance now informed him:

"Colonel McKee in a written message to Colonel England directs you are to wait for him here in Detroit. I have now given you that message. At the fort is Colonel McKee's written order. You can see it any time."

Girty's fiendish exultation vanished on hearing this. He was baffled in his supreme desire and could only say:

"I'll be along soon. I'll send word to keep you two alive till I git there."

"Belts were given to protect these men," stoutly repeated the sergeant.

"Of course they was given. Good belts, too. All of Blue Jacket's belts are good. Of course these two men won't git hurt. And when I reach Blue Jacket's village I'll look lively to make sure they're treated gentle like. But there's no law against my scaring 'em a bit if I can."

"By ——, Captain Girty! I don't like your words or your way of speaking them," cried the sergeant. "And not being in your department I make free to say as much."

Girty grinned broadly at this and said to me:

"You'll be treated like a belt-bearer—" I thought of Ogden—"you'll live off the fat. In a few days I'll be with you. The trip up the Maumee will be mighty pleasant. You'll have Jim and the Snake along for company. What a lot of things you'll have to tell each other! And won't Jim be tickled to have you along! It ain't every man that Jim takes to. It ain't every man that Blue Jacket thinks enough of to swap good belts for. He'll prob'ly want you to stay with him."

And still grinning, he turned and worked his way through the crowd, and we were marched toward the shore, leaving Papa Marsac and his friends to dispose of the dead man as they would.

I knew we were going to a hideous death. Blue Jacket would not openly violate the promise contained in his belts; but after his vengeance had been satisfied and our mutilated remains were hidden from sight there would be many explanations of our disappearance. With momentous events turning on their hinges the Crown would have no time to inquire into our fate.

I did not think for a minute that Colonel McKee had any idea we would be unsafe on the Maumee. He knew nothing of the true situation, however. He believed he was satisfying the savage pride of Spotted Snake and Blue Jacket by sending us back until we could be ransomed or traded for. And, as Sergeant Dance had so pithily reminded, we were by our own tell men without a country until the king offered us an asylum. But the pity of it all! Americans on American soil surrendered to the mercies of savages by one who was a renegade!

* * *

IT WAS not until we were aboard the *Dunmore* that I remembered how completely I had failed in my mission. General Wayne would wait in vain for his special messenger. I had not even learned the outcome of the conference across the river.

Weighed down by the misery of my lot and smarting with shame as I dwelt on my failure, I threw myself on the deck in the stern. Forward were grouped the Shawnee warriors, together with Jim Girty and his red wife. Simon-ne, the spoiled child, had evaded the Pleiss woman and was clambering like a monkey among the sheets. Captain Ford came forward, reached up and seized him by the nape of the neck and restored him to his mother. He promised him a rope's end if he took further liberties. Shawnee Betsy glared at him wrathfully, but the captain was autocrat on the *Dunmore*. A white man came over the rail and looked up and down the deck. I turned my head away. Then he was standing over me, his face twisted into a grin. His hand was on his knife, and his eyes held a beastly light.

"Nothing much to stop me from notching them long ears right now," he remarked.

"Try it and we'll throw you overboard," Durgin defied him.

Then the —— was loose in him, and he whisked out his knife. Captain Ford roared at him:

"Put up that knife! Get forward! Those men are to be delivered safe and sound at the mouth of the Maumee."

Girty stared at the captain murderously but found something disquieting in the cold, steady stare of the blue eyes. As he rejoined his wife I said to the captain—

"And after we reach the Maumee they'll burn us."

"I have my orders," he gruffly retorted. "You'll be safe so long as you're aboard this boat."

The anchor came up, and we began our journey down the river. But neither Durgin nor I had any heart for the passing scene. I could hear the barefooted Frenchmen and the pretty French girls calling out to us from the vine-covered porches, but we did not look ashore. Surrounded by white people, we had been surrendered to a red village. We reclined on the deck, our heads to the rail.

I could tell by the freshening breeze and the careen of the schooner when we left Celoron Island behind and entered the lake; yet we would not lift our heads to gaze about. The Indians were chattering in a lively fashion, pleased as children with the voyage. Spotted Snake walked up to us several times, his small eyes gloating, but he did not offer to address us. Several other Shawnees inspected us, and each appeared to be highly pleased. The Pleiss woman attempted to join us but was brutally ordered back by Girty.

After the first of these visitations we would not give them the satisfaction of noticing them. Then one pair of moccasins remained stationary close by my side. I refused to lift my gaze. A harsh voice asked—

"Are the white men dogs that they dare not look up?"

The blood surged fever-hot through my veins, but I maintained my self-control. I whispered for Durgin to keep his head bowed. The voice continued:

"They say the white men ran away from the Long Knives. The Black Snake's men will be stronger now the men with the weak hearts have left them. They say the white men will not do the red stake honor when they burn, but will hop about like frightened hares."

He stepped to the rail as if tired of badgering unresponsive victims. One hand hung down close to my shoulder. Through the muscular fingers I glimpsed a wad of paper. I glanced at Captain Ford. He was busy studying the weather. The fingers opened, and the ball of paper fell at my side. My hand covered it.

Shifting to the Chickasaw trade language, he muttered:

"Big canoe behind. To-night. Keep eyes open."

He left us, pausing along the rail to look at the low lands in the west. Durgin saw me recover the bit of paper and whispered—

"Is there one teeny ray of hope?"

"It was the Night Walker. He plans for us to escape in the boat hitched astern. Don't look at it."

I glanced about the deck and noted Captain Ford's preoccupation. He was scowling, and I fancied the breeze was dying. I slowly smoothed out the strip of paper and shielded it in my palm as I read:

> Although we did not effect a peace, yet we hope that good may hereafter arise from the mission. (signed) Beverly Randolph, Virginia; Timothy Pickering, Pennsylvania; Benjamin Lincolon, Massachusetts.*

I read it over several times until I had memorized it and then repeated it to Durgin until he had it by heart. I concealed the paper in my breeches. It scarcely seemed to be worth saving. It smacked of more compromises which were sure to make the tribes despise us. It suggested that the commissioners still entertained a hope of making peace some time. It was not the message that General Wayne hoped to receive. It told nothing.

Rising to my feet I interrupted Captain Ford's scrutiny of the sky and water to ask—

"Can you tell me, captain, if any decision has been reached in the council across the river?"

Without looking at me he replied: "If you knew that you'd know as much as your betters. Don't you know better than to talk to the steersman?"

Bread and meat were served us, and James Girty, unlike his brother Simon, partook of no spirits. He slept much of the time. The wind failed us after we had passed the mouth of the Raisin, and the night found us practically becalmed and the captain impatient for a breeze. The Chickasaw came to the stern and glanced down on the boat at the end of a short line. This was a reminder for me to be ready, but I could do nothing more than to wait. Girty was still asleep, as was the boy Simon-ne. Shawnee Betsy pillowed the youngster's head in her lap. The Pleiss woman ventured aft and whispered:

"Oh, mister, can't you git loose some way? Can't you jump overboard and swim for it?"

"Hush!" I warned her. "And listen. We may try to get away in the boat tonight and make for the Great Trail."

"God mightn't forgive you if you left me behind!"

"You will be safe and unharmed. You'll be ransomed. I'll see you're ransomed if I get through."

"God might find it hard to forgive you if you didn't take me along," she persisted in a teary undertone.

"But there is death in the road. There's much Indian country to steal through."

"I can shoot. I can swing an ax. I can cook. I can walk and run as long as the longest-legged he-critter north the Ohio."

The dusk concealed the angles of her misery-worn face and allowed her to appear youthful of figure, and her soft wailing voice was that of a maiden. Her brief recital of her accomplishments savored of prim claims modestly set forth by one quite inexperienced in life. As I made no answer she went on:

"Oh, I can't stand it any longer! I'm all the time thinking of my young 'uns. I'm thinking of my man. And there's that pesky cow that's to blame for all my troubles! I'm a poor, lone creetur——"

"Be ready if we make for the boat. Now go away!" I whispered; for I feared she was attracting attention to us.

My heart sank as the breeze threatened to liven, but the sun was down, and beyond sending ripples to *lap-lap* against the starboard side of the low hull the *Dunmore* gained nothing from the light westerly land-breeze. A tall figure, wearing a blanket, came up and in passing me kicked my foot. Girty still slept, but Simon-ne was imperiously calling for food. The Pleiss woman left her mistress, saying she would get something for the boy to eat, and Shawnee Betsy was too indolent, or too sleepy, to note her slave was making toward the stern. It was difficult to distinguish one form from another the length of the deck, but I kept my gaze fixed on the tall figure that had kicked me.

Durgin rose to his knees, his small knife in his hand. Two of the Indians separated from the lolling group and stood in the bow. I knew one of these was the Night Walker. Just what he purposed doing I could not guess, but I knew he was about to attract all attention forward so as to give Durgin and me an opportunity to drop into the boat; and I unsheathed the knife I had taken from Quain's blanket-roll. I had expected to wait until the middle of the night before making the attempt.

---

*Code message actually sent to Wayne to announce war was inevitable and to direct him to take the offensive at once.

It happened. A surprized cry was uttered by one of the men in the bow; then I had a blurred glimpse of both going over the rail and heard a heavy splash. For a couple of seconds the group forward was silent; then a sailor yelled:

"Men overboard! One Injun threw t'other over!"

Captain Ford rushed forward. Jim Girty came out of his dreams and profanely demanded to know what was the matter. Durgin glided to the stern, pulled in the rope and dropped into the boat. I crouched on deck for a moment, knife in hand, glaring about to discover the Pleiss woman. Her voice beneath me faintly called out:

"Hurry, mister! In God's good mercy, hurry!"

Unseen by any of us she had gained the boat while pretending to bring food to Simon-ne. Girty was roaring—

"Where's my rifle?"

I swung myself down, landed between the woman and Durgin and severed the rope with my knife. Durgin pushed an oar into my hand and set to work with the other. The confusion forward was great; Girty's loud voice repeatedly demanding to know who had stolen his rifle. Captain Ford came pounding aft, yelling—

"Get into the boat and circle around!"

I bent my back and pulled with all my strength. We shot several rods toward the hidden shore. The bleating cry of a man pulling in the empty rope followed us and incited us to greater efforts. Captain Ford shouted that the boat was gone. Girty howled:

"Prisoners gone! Tricked us like we was sheep!"

Then in Shawnee he was crying:

"Overboard and get that boat! They're making for the shore! They're close by! They're unarmed! A keg of rum to the first man to reach it!"

"The Spotted Snake is in the water. Some of us must look for him and help him!" a Shawnee cried.

They commenced splashing overboard. Shawnee Betsy was screaming that the Snake had been killed by the strange Indian. The boy Simon-ne was loudly bleating for the "white squaw." And all the time Durgin and I were pulling for the shore. We could hear the warriors in the water calling Spotted Snake by name, but the Snake made no answer.

"Night Walker jumped into the lake. Took the Snake with him and drowned him. Probably was drowned himself," I softly told Durgin.

"Sorry and glad. Have the woman keep an eye out for heads."

"Don't you fret about me not keeping a mortal keen watch," hoarsely whispered the Pleiss woman.

And there was no suggestion of the maiden in her voice now.

"I've got Girty's rifle, horn and bullet-pouch. Thought we oughter have a gun."

This was excellent news; for I was fearing what would happen to us once we made the land. The naked swimmers would be hot on our track, and were we held up by marsh or swamp our lead would vanish and they might be upon us before we could find the Great Trail. But their arms would be limited to knives and axes.

I suggested we follow down the shore so as to tire out the swimmers, but Durgin insisted on landing as soon as possible. He argued that the Indians would make direct for the shore, knowing we must land before the morning light. There was no disguising the creak of our oars. From the deck of the *Dunmore* flared a strong light. We could see Girty, his wife and Simon-ne and Captain Ford leaning over the rail. The dark heads of swimmers also were revealed. Girty gave a yell and pointed in our direction, and I knew the light had overtaken us. The bobbing heads converged toward us. The Pleiss woman sharply whispered:

"Head close by! Keep moving! I'll bust him with the rifle-barrel."

Then the light died down, and the darkness rushed in blacker than ever. I was still marveling that a swimmer could overtake us when Durgin shipped his oar and slashed outward. Next a dark object broke water just out of reach. The woman cocked the rifle.

"The Night Walker!" puffed the swimmer.

I seized the rifle-barrel and told the woman it was our friend. Then the Chickasaw was at the stern, fairly exhausted and hanging limp as we towed him along. We slid up on a mud flat, and the Chickasaw staggered through the shallow water, puffing for wind and urging us to leave the boat. As we took to water I slid a hand under his elbow to help him along and felt something on my wrist that was too warm for lake-water.

"You are hurt!" I said.

He threw off my helping hand and replied: "It is nothing. The Spotted Snake was a very brave man. His fangs were sharp. He knew he must die and used his fangs once. But the Night Walker's claws were sharper and went deeper. He was a very brave man."

And I knew they had fought it out to the death with their knives while under water.

We cleared the marshy tract and started inland. An ululating call told us when the first of our pursuers reached the shore. He was above us, which was well. The cry was repeated at the point where the boat had grounded. It ran up and down a short section of the shore. The Night Walker took the lead. Carrying the rifle, I brought up the rear. The Chickasaw found the darkness small hindrance and quickly had us in a game-path where we could trot along very decently. Without his guidance we might have blundered about until overhauled, captured or killed. The game-path conducted us to the Great Trail, and we turned south.

"Thanks be to God for His goodness, mister; and thanks be to the good boat!" sobbed the Pleiss woman.

"The danger is not over," I warned her. "We must leave this trail before morning. We must keep away from the Maumee. The savages will be pounding after us, and the schooner will reach the Maumee and start many men hunting for us. We must strike to the west and lose ourselves. It will be hard work."

"Thanks be to God for the chance!" she softly exclaimed. "I ain't afraid of hard travel and scant victuals. But I'll die before I'll be cooped up with a Injun squaw, not knowing what's happened to my children, my man. And we oughter git that cow across the river if the poor critter ain't been killed."

We made what progress we could down the ancient trail. It was an extension of Nemacolin's Eastern Path, which my father and his three brothers had followed thirty-three years before, when they marched with Braddock to whip the French. Behind us were the Shawnees, very brave men. More to be feared were James Girty and Captain Ford; one incited by the lust to slay, one by a strong sense of duty to deliver his human freight on the Maumee. With a smart breeze the schooner could skirt the shore and set Girty ashore to join the chase. This much danger was crowding our heels. Ahead of us was the menace of the savage bands making for Detroit.

CHAPTER XI

CLEANSING THE BLOODY WAY

WE LEFT the Great Trail before sunrise where it began its eastward course. The Pleiss woman was vastly better in woodcraft than Durgin, who had to be watched and prevented from leaving telltale signs along the game-path we were following. The sun had been up three hours when the Night Walker halted and with great care conducted the New Englander and the woman from the trail and up the bed of a rivulet. I passed on for a mile and circled back through the black growth to the hiding place.

This was a recess under a ledgy cliff, well screened by dwarfed oak and hazel-bushes. We had no food and forgot our hunger by going to sleep. At the end of four hours the Chickasaw shook my foot, and I relieved him. Durgin and the woman were allowed to sleep through until sundown. There had been no signs of pursuit, and as we had to eat, the Chickasaw left us to stalk small game.

During his watch he had grubbed up several roots for clubs. These roughly resembled tomahawks. With these he managed to knock over a wild turkey and three squirrels. Hidden by the cedars, we made a small fire and broiled the meat, the smoke being lost in the dusk. As there was a danger of keen nostrils smelling the smoke the Indian extinguished the blaze when the meat was half-done.

Crouching there in the gloom, we ate ravenously of the unseasoned meat. The Chickasaw touched us in turn, then placed a finger on my lips and softly glided along the front of the ledge and beyond the ground-growth. We had heard nothing, and I doubted if the Night Walker had detected any definite menace. Whispering for my companions to remain in hiding and surrendering the rifle to the woman, I stole after the Indian.

I paused within a few feet of the game-trail. The dark forest was silent enough. As I sat on my heels a figure passed my covert with the noiselessness of an apparition. I assumed it was the Chickasaw but did not dare signal him. I was on the point of rising and following him to ascertain what he was searching for when a second form stepped into the path a dozen feet from me. If the first man was my friend then this one was an enemy.

A soft bird-like note sounded on my left, the direction of the lake. The figure before me remained motionless, and I began to believe *he* was the Night Walker. The call was repeated, and now the man before me answered it. Soon there came the soft pattering of feet, and the gloom surrendered a third comer. He came from the east. The man in the path asked in Shawnee—

"Why is the Elk behind when he was in front?"

The newcomer leaped upon him with the quickness of a tree-cat and stifled the startled cry. They tumbled about for a few moments; then one man was standing, breathing heavily. I did not know which had won the strange duel, but I knew that the Night Walker was before me, either on his feet or dead in the path. The soft padding of moccasins on my right announced the return of the first savage. He was back to investigate the scuffling sounds.

"What is it?" he asked. "Did a bear cross the path?"

"A panther crossed the path!" murmured the winner of the combat.

And I heard the dull crunch of an ax, and the man who had inquired about a bear was floundering on the ground.

"Shawnee dog!" whispered the Chickasaw.

"Your friend is here," I softly announced in the Chickasaw trade jargon.

"Let my brother come out."

I entered the trail while he was scalping his first victim. Without pausing to greet me he ran to the second man. Returning to me, he boasted:

"The man of the Panther people is very brave. He is very cunning. He killed a Shawnee tracker with a knife. He killed a tracker with his ax. This is a bad place. Bring the man and woman."

I soon had my friends in the trail, and we plunged into the woods behind the Chickasaw, making southwest. After several hours of rough travel—leaving a trail a horse could have followed—we emerged into a broad strip of meadow-land and ran at a trot for several miles. The opening, like the close woods, would preserve signs of our passing, and the Chickasaw would not pause until we had penetrated deep into a growth of pine where there was no underbrush.

How we continued our journey, keeping well back from the Maumee until within a few miles of St. Joseph's River, would be a tedious recital. We moved largely at night, hiding our trail before the sun came up. During several days of violent rain we pressed forward openly, the storm hiding us as effectually as the darkness. We saw only a few bands of Indians, and these were hurrying to the Maumee.

Throughout this flight the Pleiss woman held up better than the average man. She was a help instead of a hindrance. She cooked the game the Chickasaw and I brought in. She proved she could use ax and rifle; and there was never a time when she was not eager to make longer hours and greater speed. Crossing the heads of those creeks flowing into the Auglaize we reached St. Mary's, which we crossed in the daytime under cover of a terrific downpour. Not until we were south of Big Beaver Creek did our tension relax. Then it was that the Chickasaw announced we had won our race and that no savages would block our path.

WE CELEBRATED by using the rifle more often for game, and in the place of turkeys and squirrels we feasted on deer-meat. In an abandoned group of Shawnee lodges we found a bag of salt and were duly thankful the Shawnees were salt-makers. Late one night we camped on the bank of the Wabash with a small stream on our left. Tired to the bone, we ate a hurried meal of cold meat and, with Durgin taking the first watch, slept until sunrise. Mine was the last watch, and as I glanced about in the fine, flat open woods in the early light and noted the surrounding stretches of thick bushes I knew where we were. Moving softly, I made a scout about the camp.

Across the river was the high ground where St. Clair's militia had camped at the beginning of the action. My friends were sleeping where the main army had camped. The panic-stricken army had fled southeast of our position. The woods seemed to be filled with skeletons, and the mark of the scalping knife was on every skull. There were hundreds of these sad remains. I could picture the mad scramble of the militia in crossing the river to throw the main army into confusion. I could almost hear the terrible yelling of the triumphant warriors under Little Turtle, of the Wyandots led by Simon Girty, sounding, as one survivor described it, "like an infinitude of horse-bells." General Wilkinson had risked the lives of his hundred and fifty mounted volunteers to visit the spot and bury the dead; but the deep snow had concealed the greater number of the slain.

Returning to the fire I found the Pleiss woman broiling meat. She pointed toward the spot where she had passed the night, and I saw a skeleton with two arrows through the ribs within a few feet of where she had slept.

"I don't like this place, mister," she quietly informed me. "Eat and let's be moving. I'll chaw a hunk of meat as we go along."

Durgin stumbled about, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, and when he had seen he said—

"I'll eat when Mrs. Pleiss does."

But as the Chickasaw snatched at the half-done meat he counted eleven with his fingers and proudly said, "So many scalps on that day."

We were glad to be clear of the place. After we left it behind Durgin became almost hysterical in realizing the long, hard journey was almost finished. The Pleiss woman, for the first time during our flight, displayed symptoms of nervousness. Naturally I was elated. The message I brought might displease General Wayne, but such as it was I had brought it through; and I believed I would be the first to arrive. The commissioners would have small chance of starting runners before reaching Presqu' Isle or Niagara. I was cording the bow compared with those who must travel down the Alleghany or through the Seneca country and reach the army after a tedious trip down the Ohio.

We left the open woods and struck into a growth of hazel. I was in the lead and a rod or two ahead of the others when I was startled to behold the cropped, roached head of a Huron framed in the bushes on my right. His musket was aimed at me. I was carrying the Night Walker's ax in my right hand to use in breaking a trail, and I hurled it as the fellow pulled trigger. The gun missed fire; the ax split his head. I opened my mouth to announce my kill when a gun banged on my left, and I was down, writhing and twisting in awful agony. It seemed as if I were there a very long time, suffering great pain, before Durgin's strong arms lifted me up.

"Oh, good Lord! What a wosome sight!" he groaned.

"No babying! He ain't hurt mortal. He ain't hurt much of nothing. His trotters are all right. Just a bullet through his face and a few teeth sp'iled. Git along! Git along!" cried the Pleiss woman.

"There were two," I managed to groan, my words jumbled and scarcely intelligible.

"Night Walker's after him," said Durgin in a faint voice. "Open your yawp— Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! What a fearsome sight!"

"Keep shet!" sternly commanded the woman. "His mouth's all right. Tongue ain't hurt. Only a hole through both cheeks, a few teeth knocked out and a bit of a gouge on the jaw-bone. That's soon mended."

The Chickasaw came bounding back, waving a scalp. He pushed Durgin to one side and examined my wounds. Then he made a compress of leaves and tied up my jaw in a strip torn from my shirt. Then he took time to scalp the Indian I had killed, and directed Durgin to walk by my side to support me. In this fashion, after the dangerous journey was all but ended, did I come to grievous harm at the hands of two Huron scouts.

My blood would have been poisoned had it not been for the Chickasaw's heroic treatment with a knife-blade heated red-hot the minute we got out of the hazel growth. He made poultices of the boiled bark of the linn tree. Then to keep my blood from heating he had Durgin fashion a litter of small saplings, and the two of them carried me for the last few miles to Fort Jefferson.

A train of empty wagons was about to leave for Cincinnati. I would have gone with it had not the surgeon forbidden my being moved. I called the Chickasaw and Durgin to me, gave the latter the paper and had him repeat its contents. To the Night Walker I said—

"If he falls, carry the little talk to the Black Snake."

They were gone, the three of them, and I was left to lament the sorry conclusion of my labors. A week later Captain Lewis rode into the fort and found me disconsolately trying to smoke my pipe.

"Fine work, Watson," he greeted, wringing my hand. "General Wayne spoke very handsomely of you. He will speak louder and in a voice that will carry to the Secretary of War. The code message was received days ahead of the regular runners."

"Code message?" I mumbled through my bandages.

"Of course. What else? It was agreed upon before the commissioners went North. The general had their signatures to compare with those on the message to prevent any game on the part of that skunk McKee to send a bogus message."

"It said neither one thing nor the other."

"I've told you it was a code message," he patiently explained. "And, my boy, it said one word that made Mad Anthony's eyes sparkle like a young girl's meeting her lover. It said WAR. The army marches at once to go into Winter quarters in the heart of the Indian country. On receipt of the message the general sent a courier across the river to ride post-haste to Petersburg with orders for General Scott to take the field with his mounted volunteers and be here at Jefferson by October first. So don't be impatient. If you were in Cincinnati you would only find yourself riding back to Jefferson."

My face pained me none as I listened to him. After all, my work had been of vital importance. A few teeth and a splintered jaw-bone were nothing. In my great joy I was unselfish enough to remember others and anxiously asked—

"The Pleiss woman?"

"Crossed the river with the courier. Wouldn't stop for anything. By this time she's with her husband and children. We gave her money to buy a cow, as that seemed to be on her mind."

My face rapidly mended and left me with my left cheek tucked deeply in, and the corner of my mouth twisted up in a perpetual, ghastly smile. I could not help my poor face but I was not unmindful of the general's views concerning personal appearance. The moment Captain Lewis left me I set about preparing for the general's coming. And when he found me, disfigured, but spick and span in new forest dress, his eyes lighted with approval as he commended me for what I had done.

I was very proud as the army swept up from Fort Washington and I fell in with my rifle company. "Swept" is the only word to describe that October advance of the fighting army. From Fort Washington to half a dozen miles beyond Jefferson, where we were to go into Winter quarters, is about seventy-five miles. The army covered the distance in six days. Now our commander was earning a new Indian name, meaning "The Whirlwind." His advances were a series of smashes. Two-Mile, Four-Mile, Seven-Mile and Nine-Mile Creeks received their names from our crossing-places.

On that march into the enemy's country during the glorious calm of the Indian Summer the general sounded the keynote of the campaign, when he ordered that under no consideration was the line of march to be broken nor were any gaps to be allowed between the wagons and pack-horses. If accidents happened to horses or wagons they were to be dragged aside. No partial half was to be made on any pretense whatever. The "Retreat" would sound did it become necessary for the whole line to halt. Otherwise, let what might happen to man, beast or wagon, the army was to rush on. We were to carry ourselves every minute as if moving to attack and with the expectation of being attacked.

The enemy's scouts endeavored to spy on us, but beyond learning that never before had an army moved with such rapidity against the red men they could report but little back to their chiefs on the Maumee. The general was determined there should be no surprizes along his path. Our scouts were flung out for a depth of two miles on both sides. The Night Walker and his brothers kept far in advance, and behind them was a fringe of veteran woodsmen.

All this was vastly different from St. Clair's blind advance into the wilderness; much different from that other army my father had marched with, well-equipped and led by ignorance. We men in the ranks had the satisfaction of knowing that General Wayne had said that at no time had he led such well-drilled troops. We too were conscious of our fitness; and while not making the mistake of despising the Indians we were confident we could whip all the men the Northwest tribes could bring against us.

We swept on to Greenville creek and by November sixteenth were well-hutted for the Winter. We built Fort Greenville, named in honor of Wayne's old commander in the Southern campaign, General Green. With the fort completed we were not allowed to slip into indolence, but were daily maneuvered and drilled in the surrounding woods. The axmen were ever starting roads we would never travel. In later years these old roads were to be detected by the growths of young sycamores filling them. This great activity among the road-cutters sadly perplexed the few red spies who managed to venture close enough to make discoveries.

But if there was much hard work, also there were the lighter phases; and although whisky was five dollars a gallon, coffee a dollar and brown sugar seventy-five cents a pound, we managed to mess well and be judiciously merry.

Strangely enough Durgin was hugely enjoying this return trip to the valley of the Maumee valley. Most of the men in his company were Buckskins; nevertheless he, a dyed-in-the-wool native Yankee, was soon a prime favorite with them. They respected him for the hardships and dangers he had encountered on our Northern trip, while his slight-of-hand tricks and his ingenuity with his whittling-knife attracted much attention. The officers were not above enticing him with an extra dram to entertain them of an evening.

On December twenty-fourth I was detailed as scout with a detachment under General Posey. We went to the St. Clair battle-ground to build another fort and to bury the dead. As we drew up to the mournful place Captain Edward Butler held back and said to General Posey—

"Will you excuse me, sir, from going on just now?"

The general sympathized with him and urged him to remain back. Captain Butler continued:

"When you reach the ground where the militia fell back on the head of the army please go to a large, spreading oak which you can't fail to see. Under that tree my brother's marquee was pitched. You will find his bones there. You can identify them by a fracture of one of the thigh bones."

He stayed back. We went to the tree, now barren of all its Autumn finery, and at its base, buried under the leaves, we found the skeleton of General Richard Butler. We identified the remains even as the captain had said we would.

We numbered a thousand men. Before we could begin on the fort it was necessary to collect and bury some six hundred skulls. Four cannon were also found where the Indians had concealed them. Three of these had been presented to Simon Girty the day of the massacre for his savage courage in leading the Wyandots. He led them, not as a commander, but as one who sets an example. The fort was named "Fort Recovery," and Captain Alexander Gibson was left in command with one company of artillery and a company of riflemen.

The rest of us returned to Fort Greenville across from Tecumseh's Point, once the home of that famous Shawnee. So the year closed with feasting and merry-making and much hard work, but clouded for many of us by the recollections we had brought back after burying the slaughtered army.

The Winter and early Spring passed quietly. Games were improvised to keep the men in a cheerful frame of mind. Until the snow left, our snow-ball battles—with scouts thrown out to prevent a surprize attack—were very popular. With the warm weather I was kept out much of the time, searching for Indian signs.

One morning, with June but one more day to go, I started for Fort Recovery after a scout to the north. All I had discovered on this trip were a few tracks left by red spies some days before. As they were making for the Auglaize I did not follow them. I had covered half the distance when I was startled to come on a broad trail from the direction of the Auglaize and making southwest for the fort. The signs pointed to a very large number of men. After a moment of stupid gazing the horror of the situation well-near overwhelmed me. For aught I knew Fort Recovery might be in ruins and the garrison massacred.

I followed it, running as I never ran before in the forest. I stuck to it until darkness set in. It still held southwest. My last examination of it led to the hope the Indians had not yet reached the fort. I turned to the east, so as not to blunder on the savages, and after a few miles struck direct for the fort, confident the savages were well to the west of me.

Within half an hour I smelled smoke. Reconnoitering from the top of a low, oak-covered ridge I saw many fires below. It was plain the tribes were carrying the fight to Wayne's army. Again I was forced to travel east until beyond the fires. For the rest of the night I cautiously felt my way through the blackness, praying I might arrive before the fort was taken by surprize.

THERE was a heavy mist that morning, and it was nearly seven o'clock before I sighted the fort. As I broke from the woods east of the fort some ninety riflemen and fifty dragoons came up the road from Fort Greenville as an escort to a long wagon-train. The men were dismounting and caring for their horses when I attracted their attention by firing my rifle. I waved my arms and screamed:

"Injuns! Injuns! An army of them!"

To corroborate my wild words the woods north of the fort vomited forth a horde of warriors. They charged, firing their guns as they ran and then dropping them to rely on bows and arrows and axes. Major William McMahon, a very brave man, was in command of the escort, and his orders rang out sharply. The fighting was pressed home under the walls of the fort by the time I ran among the riflemen.

I do not know when Major McMahon was killed. One moment he was calmly directing the riflemen's fire and holding the dragoons from charging the enemy as they wished to do; and when I next looked for him he was down and dead, and two wounded men were trying to get him inside the fort. The garrison added its fire to ours, and the warriors suddenly gave ground and retreated, picking up their wounded and the discarded guns as they fell back.

Simon Girty appeared on the edge of the woods, a gay handkerchief tied around his head. I took a long shot at him and missed. Another white man joined him, Tom McKee, the son of Colonel McKee. I saw many other white men with the Indians. It was the presence of these that decided the Indians to attempt a general assault. On they came, leaping and twisting sideways and yelling, firing their guns at the men manning the stockade.

They met a well-directed fire from those in the fort and under the walls and slowed up their advance, although Girty and his white friends were screaming for them to go on and finish us. A band of riflemen, who had remained in thick cover, raked their left flank. This was too much for their stomachs. Red and white gave ground and ended by running madly for the woods. The hidden riflemen joined us, and we all withdrew inside the fort. Captain Gibson estimated the savages to number more than a thousand. Little Turtle had led them in person. The ground was dotted with their dead. Girty fought bravely and repeatedly exposed himself.

Doubtless Little Turtle had been told by his medicine that he was to repeat his other victory on this spot, but his reception was far different from what he had experienced on that other misty morning when chasing the frightened militia across the river. Already he had lost more warriors than he lost when defeating St. Clair on the same spot.

But the enemy were not done quite yet. They remained covered and kept up a heavy, steady fire. Throughout the day we were pelted with a leaden rain, proving that their supply of ammunition was very large. The fort answered only when a rifleman believed he could do damage. Outside the stockade were twenty-two of our men dead, and we had carried thirty wounded inside the fort. A roll-call found three men missing.

With the night came a heavy fog. We fully expected another assault. Had they attacked us and stuck to their work they must have overwhelmed us; for the fog would have concealed them until they were very close. The dull glow of a torch here and there showed they were picking up their dead and wounded and carrying them into the woods. By this we knew they were sick of the fighting. The morning light revealed the clearing to be empty of bodies with the exception of a dozen too close to the fort to be removed.

We deeply regretted brave McMahon's death, but we rejoiced that the savages and renegades had been taught a lesson. The defeat would discourage Little Turtle and thoroughly convince him that red men no longer could butcher an American army like so many beeves. Knowing the British had built a fort (Fort Miami) at the foot of the Maumee Rapids, we enjoyed picturing McKee's chagrin on learning of the setback. Incidentally this affair at Fort Recovery was the last time Simon Girty took an active part in fighting against his countrymen.

Large quantities of supplies and munitions were rushed through to Greenville and Recovery. Wayne continued drilling his men daily. Scott's fifteen hundred mounted Kentuckians arrived at Greenville on July twenty-sixth. Two days later the Legion started out to find the Indians. The Auglaize was our objective, but with his old road-building tactics Wayne kept the foe guessing.

Some of his axmen began cutting a road toward the head of the Maumee. He sent others to begin a road toward the rapids. The true course was between these two routes. A day's march averaged from ten to fifteen miles. We were off at or before sunrise, moving with the energy and speed of an army going into action. We could have covered more ground each day had it not been for Wayne's eternal precaution against surprize attacks. We usually went into camp at three o'clock in the afternoon.

The two thousand regulars and fifteen hundred mounted men advanced in a series of rushes. We whirled over wide prairies covered with bothersome nettles. We crashed through tangled swamp growth where we had no water that we dared to drink. We lost a day at Camp Beaver Swamp, eleven miles beyond Fort Recovery, where we had to construct a bridge seventy yards in length. While this was being done the axmen chopped a road through to St. Mary's River and built Fort Adams (first called Fort Randolph).

On August third we had the fright of our lives. A tree fell on General Wayne, and he missed death by a hair. He was badly hurt, and we expected to be delayed for some days; but his high spirit was superior to his physical condition. He had ordered that the army's march must not be halted for any cause except to go into camp or to engage the enemy. So he ordered the advance and had himself lifted on his horse.

We crossed the height of land and moved down the northern slope into the valley of the Maumee. I shall always remember Durgin's exclamation of delight as, scouting ahead with me and some of the Chickasaws we burst through the brush and nettles of a stretch of swamp and looked on the beautiful meadow along St. Mary's River. It was an inspiring sight to watch the army pour out of the dense growth and draw up on the level plain.

We rushed ten miles to a small tributary of the Auglaize, the rear guard bringing in the crippled wagons. Thus by forcing our way through briers and brush and smashing our way through the open woods, we finally reached the junction of the Auglaize and Maumee on August eighth. In congratulating the army General Wayne styled the country "the grand emporium of the hostile Indians of the West."

Every non-commissioned officer and soldier received a gill of whisky that evening. At every camp-fire green corn was roasting. Only a few in the army had even seen this beautiful country before, and the amazement was great that there should be such an abundance of vegetables and such immense areas of corn. We were within fifty miles of the British fort at the rapids, and Wells' rangers reported the Indians to be two miles nearer and in great numbers.

Now it might be expected that General Wayne, being known as Mad Anthony, would hurl his army down the river and have it over with. Not so; until we came to death-grips he was Cautious Anthony. We remained on the left bank of the Auglaize, between that river and the Maumee, for several days, or until we had erected Fort Defiance. We even took time to dig a sunken passage down to the sand-bar at the junction of two streams, so that water could always be procured without loss of life. Our scouts were now in almost daily bickerings with the enemy's with little damage done to either side until William May was captured alive on August eighteenth by the Shawnees and used for a target. When we found him he had fifty bullet holes through the chest.

ON THE nineteenth we knew that we were to engage the enemy on the morrow. We were to march at five o'clock in columns two deep, in close order and without baggage, the center being left free for artillery and spare ammunition. We were to be properly garbed and to present as soldierly an appearance as possible. None of the troops was to strip unless the commander-in-chief so ordered. That day we threw up works to protect our heavy baggage and called it Fort Deposit.

It was the order concerning the baggage that told us we were close to the fighting. And never have I seen men in such high spirits as on that last night before the battle.

It was not until seven o'clock on the twentieth that the Legion took up the line of march down the river. We who scouted ahead soon located the Indians formed in three lines and stretching from the river through the tangled mass of fallen timbers for a distance of two miles across the valley. Their position was very strong. From the opposite side of the river, while fleeing to Detroit, Durgin and I had glimpsed this large area of desolation. Years before a tornado had prepared the place, and the massive tree trunks were piled and crisscrossed in places to a height of twenty feet.

No resistance was offered to our advance until eleven o'clock in the morning, when the front guard of mounted volunteers was fired upon by the hidden enemy. In confusion the guard fell back, smashing through the first line of regulars.

They in turn fell on the left of Captain Howell Lewis' company of light infantry and threw that part of the line into confusion. Lewis ordered his left to fall back forty yards, to reform and to rejoin the right, which had stood firm. This maneuver was successfully executed in a close, thick wood. The line held and was supported by a part of Captain Springer's riflemen. Fifteen minutes had elapsed. General Wayne had the situation in hand.

The weight of the fire told us that the enemy were in full force and excellently situated. Beyond the spurts of flame from the prostrate trunks and tall dead grass there were nothing by which we could locate them. They tried to turn our left flank, thinking to crowd us into the river. The general sent the mounted Kentuckians by a circuitous route to checkmate this move by turning the Indians' right, and at the same time ordered the first line to charge with trailed arms, to pitchfork the enemy out of the cover and to deliver a volley into their backs when they gave ground. With terrible yells, practised for more than two years and quite drowning out the cries of the savages, the men leaped to their work, while the legionary cavalry moved along the bank to turn the foe's left flank.

But the first line charged so swiftly that the savages broke and fled and were pursued for two miles and utterly routed by less than nine hundred men. Not a shot from the artillery was fired, and none of the cavalry was engaged. Nor did the second line participate in the battle although it cursed mightily and made every effort to share in the honor. Girty, McKee and Elliott were on the battlefield, but far in the rear. They kept close to Fort Miami as if fearing the outcome of the battle. When they beheld the Indians running madly toward them they discreetly slipped inside the stockade. The savages streamed by the fort, which was closed to them, and disappeared in the forest in the north.

We lost thirty men, and where the fighting began we counted forty dead Indians and captured some wounded Canadians. The total loss the tribes sustained will never be known. Of the Wyandots Tarhe was the only chief to escape. The actual fighting did not exceed forty minutes. For two years Wayne had planned and drilled, and when the time was ripe he broke the power of the Northwest tribes in less than an hour.

Beginning in 1755 England and the colonies essayed to achieve such a victory. For thirty-nine years British regulars, colonial militia and United States regulars and militia had endeavored to conquer the Northwest tribes and had sacrificed army after army to no purpose. He who was called "Mad," won a complete victory

Durgin and I took a great deal of pleasure in helping to fire the buildings owned by McKee while the disgruntled soldiery in Fort Miami and, we hoped, Colonel McKee looked on. On returning to Fort Defiance we made a clean sweep of all the Indian villages and all the growing corn.

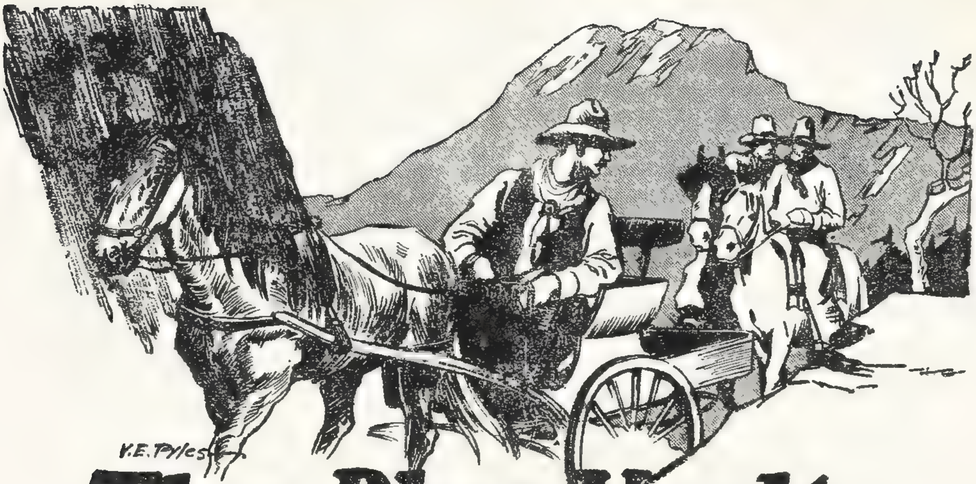
"War's over!" Durgin shouted to me as he danced about like a boy. "I've been a cussed fool long enough. I'm going back to Marietty! No long-haired Buckskin can toll me off into the woods again. Let 'em vote me down in Marietty. Who cares? There's one who won't vote me down. Thankful-for-Blessings Perkins! I tell you I'm going back. And you'll go with me."

"I'll stay here," I told him. "This is fair country."

And there spoke my father's voice in me. "*With a tight cabin a man should do well out there.*" I could hear him saying it.

And now that the years have passed, and the stout cabin has given way for a frame house, I like to believe that that great victory somehow compensated in part for the tremendous price paid by the mother-country, the colonies and new republic, in order that families instead of Buckskins might pass over Nemacolin's path, over young Washington's trail, over Braddock's military road, and plant corn north of the Ohio and find the Bloody Way no longer bloody.

THE END



The Blue Vault

by Murray Horton Johnson

GLEASON reined in; and getting out, under pretense of examining the horse's fore-foot directed a searching glance under the animal's belly at the bushes he had just passed. He was certain he saw again the slight movement behind the screen of leaves. As he climbed back into the two-wheeled gig, his eyes held a guarded look, and his mouth was set in a straight line. He sent the horse ahead again, sitting slightly sidewise in the seat, and gripping the black bag between his two feet.

He carefully avoided betraying any sign that he suspected that he was followed. Such a betrayal might precipitate action; and he must have time to think. He quickly dismissed the idea of making a straight run for it; there were too many short-cuts where they could head off the gig.

He cursed himself for being weaponless. Because he had carried the payroll for five years without trouble, was no excuse for being unprepared; it was all the more reason, indeed, to think that something was due to happen. Moreover, his neglect of the warning fact that two hard-looking strangers had drifted into Quartz City from nowhere in particular, was a carelessness that he repented of.

As he approached the mouth of the cañon, where the trail from Placer joined the road, he hopefully scanned the hillside for sign of a horseman; but the trail was empty. In another moment the sharp-rising sides of the cañon towered on each side of him, shutting him out from the world. It didn't matter; his chances of escape were as good in the cañon as in the open. That is, they were as negligible in one case as the other.

A short way into the cañon, he suddenly heard the clatter of hoofs; and looking around, saw two horsemen pull up to a walk some little way behind him. He laughed shortly at their stupidity. They had come boldly out into the open, thinking he would believe they had just come down the Placer trail and fallen in behind him. All his suspicions were confirmed; for he was absolutely certain that there had been no one on the trail.

He checked his horse to a walk. He knew almost to a certainty where they intended to attack him; a spot, well known to him, which, if they had pre-surveyed the ground, they must have chosen because of its perfect adaptation for a hold-up. This spot lay some half-mile ahead yet, at the upper end of the cañon.

The road, which followed the south side of the cañon to this point, there struck off over the crest of the north ridge, making a sharp hairpin turn. Both riders could press close behind him as he approached this place, then when he was on the bend, one could dash down the bank, low here at the cañon head, and come on to the road ahead of him, leaving the other to close in behind. A dense growth of live oak screened the place from the rest of the road.

As he came around a bulge in the cañon side, Gleason looked up and saw a smudge of white wood-smoke spreading itself against the sky. A stiff breeze dissipated it almost as soon as it appeared over the tree tops. Gleason knew that it rose from a small ranch house that stood on the near side of the adjacent cañon.

"If Wilson was only home instead of in town," thought the desperate man, "I could make a break over there with the bag."

He passed the fork where the road led to the ranch; not however without casting a longing glance in that direction. But of course it would be folly to expect aid from a woman and ten-year-old boy.

Just beyond this fork the hairpin turn came in sight. Gleason wrapped the reins around his hands, and worked the black bag over against the dash, holding it there with both feet. He would give the ruffians a surprize, anyway. If he could manage to plunge down the bank, and up again on the other side where the road went over the ridge, he would be out of the cañon; and a lively chase on the open road might not appeal to the two men so strongly as a quiet ambuscade. He heard hoof beats behind him; the horsemen were drawing up on him just as he had expected they——

He reined up sharply, staring across the gully. A man bent by the side of a saddled horse, fumbling with the girth-strap. He gave no sign that he was aware of the approach of the gig; nevertheless a palpable tenseness in the figure betrayed the careless pose. Gleason realized that he was trapped.

He lifted his whip, determined, in a sudden rage, to make a dash ahead. At that instant he heard a small patter of feet behind him, and turned quickly to see a ten-year-old lad panting toward him.

The boy climbed up on the gig wheel.

"You promised me," he cried reproachfully. "You were going right on by, 'n you promised to stop and make my kite fly!"

Gleason looked at the boy, thinking quickly. He cast a glance at the sinister figure on the road across the gully.

"All right, Jack," he acceded suddenly. "Guess I'll have to keep my promise. Got plenty of string and things, have you?"

"Sure!" cried the delighted boy. "I got some swell brown paper."

While Gleason descended, Jack pulled one of the reins through the rings and tethered the horse to a tree. The two left the road and pushed their way through the brush toward the house.

Though Gleason caught no glimpse of them, he knew without a shadow of a doubt that the two horsemen had dismounted and were following him. He clamped his fingers around the handle of the black bag in a tighter grip. He had upset the bandits' plan—but was he any better off?

Hearing their voices, Mrs. Wilson came out to the porch. Gleason cut short her greetings, giving her in a brief word the situation. The woman comprehended with quick wit, and looked at him with dismay.

"What can we do?" she exclaimed.

"Telephone over to the Crandalls'. Go back into the house as if you didn't know anything was wrong. They're watching us." He had a sudden afterthought. "Bring the kite out when you come; they'll think you went after it."

She returned in a moment, with the plaything in her hand.

"I got Mrs. Crandall," she said. "She told me Mr. Crandall and a couple of the men were in the blacksmith shed. They're probably on the way over here now." She looked at Gleason anxiously.

"What will you do till they come?"

Gleason gripped the handle of the black bag and looked grim. Then the set lines in his face slowly relaxed. He was looking at the kite which the perplexed Jack was holding in his hand. To Mrs. Wilson's surprize, he laughed.

"Might as well pass the time seeing why Jack's kite won't fly. Give it here, Jack. You stay here with your ma."

THE SURVEYED the clearing with strategic eye, then proceeded to a certain spot that could not be seen from the house; a spot so chosen that, to reach it unobserved, the skulkers would be compelled to skirt the edge of the brush—a considerable circuit. Gleason carefully set the black bag behind a stump, and began working feverishly on the kite's tail. Some minutes later he cast the plaything into the wind, skilfully paying out the string.

The big triangle of paper shot upward like a rocket. Having reached the limit of the string, it began plunging from one side to the other, as if chafing at its bridle, now and then diving recklessly earthward. But a long string tail, festooned with sheaves of paper, steadied it each time and sent it up again.

"Hands up!"

Gleason turned quickly to face two men. One of them covered him with a revolver.

"What's this?" he asked blankly. "A hold-up?"

"You've guessed it," grinned the man with the gun. "Grab the bag, Slim!"

His comrade seized the bag where it lay behind the stumps and slipping the catches, peered in. He gave a startled oath.

"Empty!"

Both stared into the bag in dumb amaze.

"Empty?" echoed Gleason, his face stupid. "Empty?"

A sheepish look came over his face.

"I guess I must have left the money on the desk at the bank. Pshaw!"

The one called Slim let out an oath—

"He's hid it somewheres!"

"When, I'd like to know," asked his comrade succinctly. "I ain't had my eyes off that bag from the time it left the gig till he set it down behind that stump." His eyes narrowed. "Unless he's stowed it away on him."

He ran his fingers over Gleason's clothes. He gave an exclamation when his fingers touched a bulge—but his face fell when the bulge proved to be only a few rolls of silver. He contemptuously tossed them to his companion. Twenty rolls in all made their appearance—but no currency. A cursory examination was enough; he could never have missed the bulge of five thousand dollars in currency.

"Junk!" he snarled. "Nothing but——"

Three rapid shots rang out from the direction of the road. The two bandits faced about, standing as if transfixed. The next instant they were running headlong for the point in the road where they had left their mounts.

Before the faint clatter of their horses' hoofs had died away, there came other faint hoof beats. These suddenly ceased, then became audible again as a thudding sound close at hand. Into the ranch yard galloped three horsemen, whom Gleason recognized as Crandall and two of his men. From the house ran Jack and his mother.

"Got away?" cried Crandall, throwing himself off his horse to Gleason's side.

The latter nodded.

"My fault," he said. "I forgot to have Mrs. Wilson tell you about that third fellow. He gave them the signal when he saw you coming."

"Did they get away with it?" anxiously questioned Crandall.

His eye caught the empty black bag. He looked at Gleason, aghast.

"They only got the chicken-feed," Gleason assured him. "About one hundred and fifty in silver. Mrs. Wilson, will you phone the sheriff? Not much chance of getting them, but he'll probably want to try."

He looked up at the kite, watching its capers with a squint of satisfaction.

"There's your kite, Jack," he said. "She's flying fine."

He began to reel in the string.

"You'll have to get another tail for it, though."

In a moment the kite fluttered down at the end of the shortened string. Gleason bent down and began carefully to remove the paper sheaves from the tail, smoothing them and dropping them into the black bag.

The Story of the First Scribe

An Incident in the affairs of Mohamed Ali

by George E Holt

Author of "The Story of the Khalifa," "A Matter of Title," etc.

WHEN Sid Hamed Mortadi, who had been first scribe, or secretary, to Mohamed Ali when he was basha of Tangier, reached the little village in Anghera wherein Mohamed Ali lay in hiding, and put at the feet of his master the seals and jewels it had been his duty to guard, his appearance was quite unexpected.

Mohamed Ali had learned that his scribe was a prisoner in the *casbah,* and the recent arrival of Mohamed Ali's former *khalifa*—after escaping death from the tigers of the basha of Meknez—had thrown some light upon the matter. The *khalifa,* after his escape from the basha's improvised arena, had found a temporary hiding-place upon the iron balcony of a certain house. From this balcony he had been dragged inside the house by one who proved to be no other than Sid Hamed Mortadi, the scribe. They had exchanged the dangers of Meknez for what had seemed to be the lesser dangers of Tangier.

But although the *khalifa* had managed to secure the archives he had hidden in the shrine of Mulai Yacoub, near the city, and to reach the haven of Mohamed Ali with them, the scribe, Sid Hamed, had been less fortunate. At the time of the hurried flight of Mohamed Ali and his friends from the basha's palace, Sid Hamed had been hard put to it to make his own escape. Faced by what seemed inevitable capture, he had hidden his seals and certain treasures, in a hiding-place of which he only knew the secret. In an attempt to secure these things, he had entered the palace—so the *khalifa* had told—wearing the uniform of a *maghazni,* or basha's guard. But his errand had failed; he had been detected and thrown into prison.

Mohamed Ali knew all too well that the basha of Tangier would guess the reason for this invasion of his premises by the scribe, and he could also surmise all too well the methods which would be used in the attempt to force his friend to divulge the hiding-place of the things with which he had been entrusted.

Now Mohamed Ali had been recently—only a few days before—to Tangier on secret business. This business had been to ascertain the possibility of aiding his scribe to escape from the *casbah,* but he had found that nothing could be accomplished on the spur of the moment. It was a matter which required thought. However, a peculiar thing had happened to him.

Sitting in the house of a trusted friend, and knowing that no other person in Tangier knew of his presence, he and his friend had been startled by the receipt of a message addressed to Mohamed Ali and written

---

"The Story of the First Scribe," copyright, 1924, by George E. Holt.

by the black magician, who was known as the Master of the *Djinnoon*. This message had suggested that wisdom would lead the feet of Mohamed Ali at sunset to the shrine of Mulai Yacoub on the Tangier-Tetwan road, in order that he might see and hear what he might see and hear.

Mohamed Ali had cautiously acted upon the suggestion, thereby bringing confusion to certain French plotters. But also he had perceived that he was somehow rendering a service to the Master of the *Djinnoon*, wherefore he had sent a return message to that personage, informing him that, while he would attend to the matter of the shrine of Mulai Yacoub, his own scribe was in prison and it would be a source of great satisfaction to him, Mohamed Ali, if the black magician could be of any service in the matter.

Thus the arrival of Sid Hamed, the scribe, was a cause of surprize as well as of relief and welcome. And both Mohamed Ali and the *khalifa* gave attentive ear as he plunged into his story.

He was a small, flashing-eyed, vivacious man, whose slender hands vied with his lips in activity.

"The *khalifa* will have told you," he said, "of our adventures up to the time that he left me in Tangier, he to go to the shrine of Mulai Yacoub, I to chase insects in the *casbah*. There I lay for what to me seemed months—although I suppose it was not more than a matter of a week. At intervals, of course, I was taken before the basha, who fumed and cursed and threatened, and commanded me to tell him what I had been doing in his palace disguised as a *maghazni*.

"Or, to be more accurate, he guessed what I had been doing there, and now tried to force me to reveal where certain things were hidden. He has unpleasant methods, this basha. I do not like him. My neck and arms still ache from the first twisting they received.

"But finally a day came when I was not dragged into his august presence—and then I knew that real trouble was afoot. In this I was not mistaken, for at sunset two men, surly fiends, were thrust into the prison, and from them I learned—most unpleasantly!—that I would unquestionably be shot for having hired them to murder the Jewish merchant, ibn-Musa.

"This was enlightening. I had no doubt that the unfortunate Musa—whom I knew to be a creditor of the basha—had ended his business negotiations on this earth and that these two scoundrels who were now locked up with me had attended to the matter. And it was also altogether too manifest that they had been promised pardon by the basha for testifying that I had hired them to commit the crime. A child could have guessed that the next move would be an offer from the basha to permit me to escape if I told him that which he wished to know. And, although a child might not have guessed it, I had a picture of Hamed Mortadi being shot down by a prison guard while making his escape, *after* he had told the basha that which the basha desired to know. Verily at that moment I heard the chant of those who march before and after the wood." *

"If he had done that," growled Mohamed Ali, "there would shortly have been a new face in *el Hotana*."

"That I knew, of course," continued the scribe. "It was a little candle in a dark night. But then—matters occurred very swiftly of which I did not know the meaning, and do not yet. That I am here at liberty I realize, but the manner in which my freedom was brought about is a puzzle. I shall tell you the tale of what occurred. Perhaps you will understand more than I do. *I* think that the *djinnoon* must have been busy."

At the word *djinnoon* Mohamed Ali looked quickly at the scribe, and a little smile drew down the corners of his mouth. Had the black magician had a hand in the matter? he wondered. But he saw in the scribe's face no knowledge that mention of the *djinnoon* had suggested anything more.

"You know," said the scribe, looking at Mohamed Ali, "that which is not common knowledge."

He raised a hand to his turban, where it was wound low about his head.

"I mean," he explained, "that I have but one ear."

Mohamed Ali and the *khalifa* nodded. They knew the story of how Sid Hamed's ear had been cut off by an angry vizier whom the scribe had overheard discussing treason.

"Imagine then, my surprize, when late one night came a *maghazni* with a lantern demanding to know if there was among us prisoners, a man who had but one ear. He was, of course, greeted with ribald laughter and jesting; was, in fact, so bedeviled that he drew his *kumiah* with the intention, he said, of making a one-eared man if there did not already happen to be one present.

---

*Bier

"But before carrying out his threat he roughly began snatching off the turbans and throwing back the hoods of *djellabas* to see for himself whether any one among us lacked an ear. And thus, of course, when he came to me, he found what he sought. But having found it, he seemed puzzled.

" 'You—' he said, 'you—but you were to be most strictly guarded. Hmph! Hmph! Most strictly. And yet—my orders are explicit. To bring from the *casbah* any man who has but one ear. There is no other here. Hmph! Well—I obey orders. Come, then; but no tricks.'

"Outside the prison he called a guard with a rifle and they marched me off.

"Very swiftly we covered the short distance between the prison and the basha's palace, which I found was our destination. And very swiftly, also, I was thrust into a room in which sat two men. One of them was the basha and the other was a huge negro swathed in voluminous black sateen garments. Him I knew not, and his presence with the basha gave him no favor in my eyes.

"When the basha saw me he half-rose and began a loud objection to something or other. He seemed much surprized. But the black man pulled him back to his seat with an abrupt hand and, ignoring him, asked me if it was my good fortune to have but one ear.

" 'I consider it good fortune, Sidi,' I told him, 'that I have at least one ear.'

" 'This then,' said the black to the basha, 'is assuredly the man my *djinnoon* have told me to use.' And then to me, 'Come hither, that I may be certain that an ear is missing.'

"I complied with his request, seeing nothing to be gained by refusal. But as he leaned toward me his eyes caught mine, and a strange thing happened. In the depths of his black eyes little lightnings began to flash and the eyes grew bigger and bigger, and I seemed to be falling into them. The last I remember was that I heard the voice of the black man, as from a great distance, commanding that I foretell how many years the present Sultan would continue his reign.

"I seem to remember myself replying as one to whom all knowledge of the future had been granted—but I do not remember what I said. And then total darkness descended upon me.

"When I came to my senses I was squatting upon a cushion before the black man, and I was very tired. The black man was looking at the basha and the basha was returning his look, nodding his head, and smiling a little.

" 'That is as I thought,' said the basha. 'That is as I thought. Wherefore——'

"But the smile faded and his lips closed firmly as the lips of one who has caught himself on the verge of an indiscretion. Then the basha looked upon me reflectively, and with narrowed eyes, for a long moment. After which he turned abruptly to the black and said:

" 'There is another matter, Sid Habib. Not a matter of any great importance—still one which would do away with a certain annoyance. So while you are here——'

" 'It is not wise to bother the *djinnoon* with matters of no importance,' interrupted the black. 'Otherwise one human alone might keep all my *djinnoon* busily occupied. But—what is it you desire now?'

"The basha turned again to me.

" 'Go to the far end of the room,' he ordered. 'I would speak of a confidential matter to the Master of the *Djinnoon*.'

" 'The Master of the *Djinnoon*,' thought I, as I obeyed. 'So this is the Master of the *Djinnoon*. I have heard of him.'

" 'After a minute of whispering between the basha and the black, the latter motioned me again to approach; and as I did so his eyes again caught and held mine, and I seemed to be floating rather than walking, and a peculiar—oh, a most peculiar—sensation came upon me. I felt not only that I desired to obey the commands of this black man, but that it was for my own good to do so.

"Such a feeling is not good, my friends—but that I did not realize then. And this time, as I obeyed him I did not again fall into the black pit of his eyes. All that took place I was aware of—as I might have been aware of what another person was doing. The black spoke to me, slowly, and with a tone of indescribable command.

" 'There is a certain thing hidden, of which you know,' he said. 'You yourself hid it. I command you to bring it to me.'

"Now I was quite well aware that the thing the basha desired to secure in this manner was the little package of seals and jewels that I had been forced to hide; and that the hiding-place was in the room adjoining the one we occupied. And although, as you know, Sidi, ordinarily I would have died rather than to reveal the hiding-place—and as the basha knew, also—nevertheless I saw myself rise and go without hesitation to the place where I had hidden them."

"*Allah kerim!*" exclaimed the *khalifa*.

But Mohamed Ali was silent.

"Allah is great, yes," agreed the scribe. "As you shall see."

"Both the basha and the black rose and followed to the door leading into the other room. Both saw me go to the hiding-place with its secret door and take therefrom the small package. Then I returned to them. The basha held out his hand to take the package, but the Master of the *Djinnoon* stepped in front of him, and in to his black hand I gave it. He thrust it beneath his cloak.

" 'It is for me,' said the basha, and there was an ugly tone in his voice.

But the black led the way back to the cushions. Then he looked the basha in the eyes and said:

" 'Be not in haste, oh Sidi, nor covetous. The *djinnoon* who serve me like neither haste nor greed. There is a matter still to be attended to before I give you the package.'

" 'And that?' snapped the basha.

"The Master of the *Djinnoon* turned stern eyes upon the basha and I seemed again to see the little lightnings flicker in them.

" 'You have seen, Sidi, what my *djinnoon* can do to one man. Do you wish to see what they can do to another?'

"The basha's eyes fell and his face grew a little gray.

" 'No, no, Sidi. No. Your pardon, Sidi,' he said. 'What is this other matter that you say is to be considered?'

" 'It concerns this man with but one ear,' replied the black. 'My *djinnoon* commanded that I use him for the purpose for which he has already been used. Wherefore he must have merit in their eyes. That he serves them well, you have seen. Wherefore I desire that you pardon him in order that he may serve my *djinnoon* yet further.'

"The basha raised an objecting hand and shook an objecting head.

" 'Then, Sidi,' said the black, 'No package will ever reach your hands. Besides—I wonder what His Majesty the Sultan would think concerning one who inquired of the *djinnoon* as to how long his reign would continue?'

"And again the black eyes bored into the basha's gray ones.

"For while one could count ten they sat thus; then the basha with a shrug said:

" 'Give me the package.'

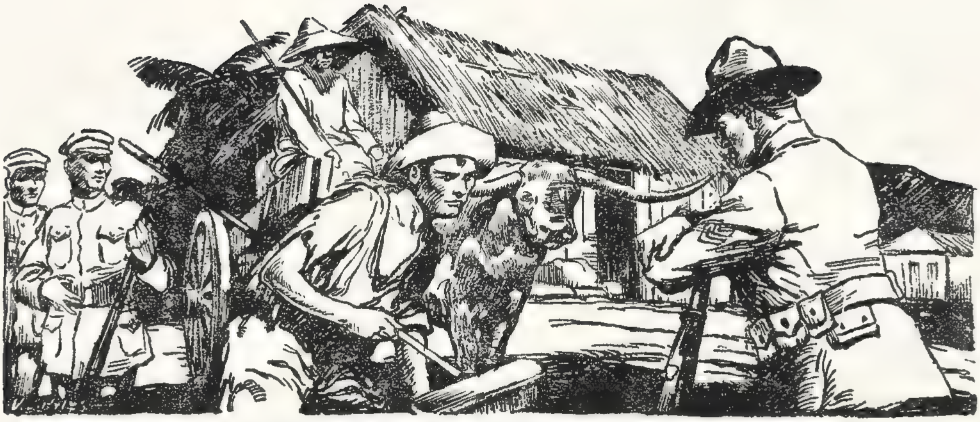
"Then, Mohamed Ali, being in my right senses, I saw that I had been tricked, and I grew desperate. I saw the black take from his *shakarah* a small package and hand it to the basha, who thrust it into his belt. Then the black looked at me and all grew dark again.

"When I awakened, my friends, I was in a little room which I did not recognize at all, and I was alone. For a few minutes my soul descended to the tortures of *el Hotana*, in memory of the way I had been tricked, and at the forced betrayal of my trust. Then the door opened and I saw standing before me my friend, Walid M'barak, who, Mohamed Ali, was your second scribe, and my own assistant. Shortly he will arrive, also, I think. He was detained by a certain matter.

" 'How came I here?' I asked of him.

"That I do not know,' he told me. 'You came to my door as one walking in sleep—and how you knew I was here—for few indeed are those who know!—is a thing I should like to hear. But you had scarce entered the house when you sank upon the cushion where you now are, and went to sleep.'

"And then, Mohamed Ali, I told him something of this story, and in despair threw myself down upon the cushions. Something hard hurt my neck. I looked upon the cushion and there was nothing there—but in the hood of my *djellaba*, hanging upon my shoulders, I found the package I had taken from the hiding-place in the basha's palace."



White Men Stick Together

A Complete Novelette by Barry Scobee

Author of "Gambler's Qualifications," "The Derelict Ranch," etc.

THE tide raced through the strait like the mightiest of rivers in flood. It was the Sulu Sea being forced through the spout of a funnel. The water piled upon itself, and seethed and foamed and troubled as if some subterranean monster were threshing underneath.

Two tugs pulled at a barge filled with half-maddened carabao that tossed their long simitar-curved horns and bellowed. The hawsers from tugs to barge were straight lines. No headway was visible. It even seemed that the vessels were being drawn backward by the mighty current.

A big white United States Army transport lay in the roadway with both anchors dragging at the ends of taut cables. The few remaining soldiers aboard her stood at the rails. At least two-thirds of them were landsmen wholly new to the ways of the salty sea. They watched the tide-rip with curious eyes. One of them put a question that was bred of his going about in the Philippine Islands a few days while the ship had paused here and there for parts of the regiment to disembark.

"How in the world do those flimsy native outrigger canoes manage to percolate in this stirred-up water?"

It was Adam Scott, old-time duty sergeant, who answered.

"They don't. I spent six months here four years ago. When the tide's running like this you couldn't drive the natives forty feet off shore with a whip."

"Does it quit running sometimes?" came the innocent query.

A chuckle from the wiser ones rippled along the rail.

"Ye inland greeniper, didn't ye ever hear tell of the tides?" exploded Adam Scott. "They flow one way a while and then turn around and flow the other way. Ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours."

"Yeah," came the skeptical retort, "I'll bet they do!"

Adam Scott—he was seldomly called merely Scott or sergeant, but his full name—chuckled dryly. It was as near as he ever came to laughing, though he was frequently cheery in a gruff sort of manner. He was a man of tremendous convictions, therefore a leader of men, and he was listened to by his regiment and company as authority.

"When I was here at Oli-Oli the other time," he went on, "eight soldiers monkeying around in a Q. M. dory got caught in the tide-rip and were carried twenty miles out to sea. Happened an Australian tramp steamer picked them up or it would have been good-bye Johnnies."

"Another time a native and his woman were coming to the barracks with a canoe-load of chickens and got into the clutch

---

"White Men Stick Together," copyright, 1924, by Barry Scobee.

of the water. It was flowing about like this is now, and they were mauled about and misused. A Q. M. launch started down the river to help them. The natives along the shore were all wailing and saying the pair would be washed into the wave caverns in the rocks on the other shore and drowned. The eight fellows washed out to sea came near getting their medicine there too. But before the launch got around the man and his woman were upset and drowned. Been two soldiers drowned in the current. It's no place for men to dabble."

The men were silent for a moment, then Scott spoke more cheerily:

"Well, there's the quartermaster's launch coming out to take us off. Just turning out of the breakwater at the river-mouth, see?"

Everybody saw and watched eagerly. They had not set foot on land for a month and this Malayan country was interesting beyond words to the white men of the north. The regiment had come over to relieve another doughboy outfit. Companies G and H were to go ashore here by launch and take over the garrison and permit two companies of another infantry outfit to come aboard for the return of the transport home to the States.

The landing-place was at a wharf along the river that flowed through the noisy and odorous city of the Visayans, Negritos and Chinese. The launch slid into the smooth-flowing dirty stream and presently approached the wharf, the new soldiers gazing in wonder at the strange sights. They bumped the piling and stood ready to step ashore at command.

And as they waited momentarily every eye was caught up with a sight that caused them to stare and exclaim.

The younger men, unused to brown skin countries, instinctively felt that something was wrong in what they beheld. Those older men who had done military service in the Islands before, understood that a more or less revolutionary thing was in process. Some of them growled, and Adam Scott was heard to say—

"That's about the scrawniest thing I've ever seen in the Philippines."

For what they beheld was a white man in rags scooping up the dung of carabao with a shovel and throwing it into the river, while two armed native policemen kept guard over him.

But that was still not the sum total of it to these American eyes.

As the man worked in his mentally dilapidated, hang-head, sickly manner, half-clad native boys sat in the shade of a warehouse and flipped pebbles at the prisoner. They did it impudently, defiantly, in a way that betokened no good for the prestige of white men.

II

HELD for the moment from going ashore by a conference of incoming and outgoing officers, the men on the launch turned their attention to the next most predominant spectacle. This was a sergeant in charge of outgoing men loading company property on to a scow.

He was a huge fellow, this sergeant, with the undershot chin of habitual belligerence, and a flappy mouth from which issued roaring orders for more speed.

"C'm on, you slaves, don't be feared o' breakin' your backs. Drop that field desk! Ye think ye haf to hold it in yo' hands all the way to Frisco? Hump! I'll give you somethin' to take the curl outa yo' hair and the sass offa yo' tongue!"

The harangue was punctuated by the spewing of tobacco-juice. The eyes of the new arrivals passed from this over the litter of *lorchas* of the Chinese traders; over the bawling carabao being unloaded; past bales of golden hemp, past sugar spread out on a canvas in the sun and dust to dry—back to the first spectacle, the white man being tormented by the half-clothed natives.

Adam Scott shook a puzzled head.

"Don't understand this," he said. "Natives baiting a white man."

Scott was of the sturdy American "little red school-house" breed. Soldiering for years at the remote outposts of Anglo-Saxonism, in the Islands, Alaska, Panama, he had become, what he confessed to be, a crank on the subject of the white man's mission in the world, of Nordic superiority as he saw it. "White man" was his fetish. He carried a small, select library on the subject. He thought in terms of the Anglo-Saxon peoples.

With nothing to do for the moment and aroused to keen wonder, Adam Scott strode through the deep dust with sudden resolve and spoke to the hang-headed specimen of a white man.

"That's a funny bodyguard you got

there, buddy," he said, flicking a thumb at the two brown-uniformed native policemen.

He had not finished the words before both policemen were coming at him, one wildly waving his arms and jabbering, the other whipping out his pistol and waggling it. The sergeant halted. The man with the gun managed mongrel English:

"You no talk them *hombre!* Our prisoner."

The prisoner raised his head. Adam Scott saw that he was a blond, blue-eyed young fellow with a thin, crooked mouth, yet with a straight, unafraid look in his eyes as they blazed at Scott.

"Get your carcass out o' here!" he grated nastily. "You scum o' righteousness, white men——"

The two policemen of the city sprang upon their prisoner excitedly. He with the pistol poked and shoved crazily at the white man's mouth with the gun, as if trying to shove the spoken words back down the throat. He only succeeded in breaking off a tooth, which the prisoner, staggering backward, spat out with quickly gushing blood.

The native boys who had been taunting laughed out mockingly. Scott and other soldiers instinctively started to the prisoner's rescue with rifle butts ready, to check such vicious manhandling.

"Nothing like that!" the major bawled. "Those are constituted police officers of the city. It's their prisoner, their duty. We've no right to interfere."

The men drew back muttering, knowing his words were true.

The white prisoner, still unafraid and spitting blood, continued his straight-eyed defiance of the American soldiers.

"There ye are!" he bellowed. "There's how! Some of ye is afeared and some of ye dassant!"

The two policemen did not plunge in so savagely now, having seen the temper of the soldiers, but they were sullen at having to be more modest with their authority. They caught the man by his arms and jabbered. The prisoner bellowed again above the racket:

"There's how white men don't stick together over here in this yaller country! There's how you're traitors to your color!"

The man, to the snarl and drag of the policeman, gave the Americans his back and resumed his disgraceful labor. The white men, in private puzzled speculation, looked on in silence.

"This is my fourth trip to the Philippines," Adam Scott said after a moment, "but I've never seen anything like this before, this baiting of a white man."

His first tour of duty had been in 1899, when he was a young, big-eyed buck on his first trip from the Missouri backwoods. He had seen natives shot for small offenses, had seen Americans punished for disgraceful conduct—had seen white man prestige and self-respect upheld at any cost.

Adam Scott lost no time in useless wonder. He turned his back on the harsh scene of a white man shoveling dung, one thought uppermost—white man, his peace and business and happiness; his schools, churches and laws, everything he had brought to this distant curve of the globe, was imperilled by such as this.

The stocky, sturdy soldier went striding toward the bossy sergeant of the outgoing soldiers, thinking that here was a source of information. As Scott approached, the fellow nodded toward the two policemen and the prisoner and called out:

"Ain't that a purty pichure? Yammerin' about white men not sticking together. But he ain't white, only on the skin. The punk stiff!"

"Is he an American?"

"Baw, he don't act like one! We don't know. He come a slidin' in here one evening a week ago from out o' nowhere. Come rollin' down the Street o' Many Shades o' Hair and along the Military Road drunker'n a boiled owl and singin' hoarser than a sailor on pay-day. 'Marchin' down the bund to disgrace the white man,' he sings. 'Lie down with the dogs, get up with the lice,' he says. 'The spiggoties are higher grade,' he says, and to prove he believes it he goes up and kisses a dirty eel fisherman coming out of the lagoon on the cheek. Drunk! Awful. Shameless disgrace. And the native cops pinch him. And us soldiers is so mortified we wish we didn't belong to the white race."

The talkative soldier paused to gulp in fresh air, then went on:

"You may be wonderin' why we ain't settled his hash for him. We been too busy getting ready to go back to God's country. We're going to Fort Snelling where Minnehaha Falls! Ha-ha! We'll leave this bird to ye. And mind ye, before that white transport out there whistles on the horizon for more speed ahead, he'll have you new fellers disgraced."

"How's that?" asked Adam Scott.

"How's that? Why, his time's up this evening. He get's out o' the city hoosgow. And he'll come a-howlin' that white men don't stick together."

III

THE Street of Many Shades of Hair was the main thoroughfare from the heart of the city of Oli-Oli to the military reservation. On it were consuls and private citizens from Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Japan and other nations—men of many shades of hair, from the blond of the northman to the black of the Japs. The city stopped abruptly at the edge of the reservation.

The reservation was shaped like a fishhook, it being no more than a sand-bar about three times as wide as a road, with a fine gravel road running down its middle to the very point of the hook, where the drive circled the military hospital and doubled back on itself.

At the eye of the hook were the quartermaster's corrals and warehouses. Where the long shank began to bend there was an ancient Spanish fort of solid masonry with unbelievably ancient cannon scattered on the wall and in the sand at the foot—cannon bearing Spanish dates and names, some of the pieces not so long as a baseball bat and but little larger around, and some ten feet long and of a proportionate diameter. A boy could lift the smaller ones up in his arms.

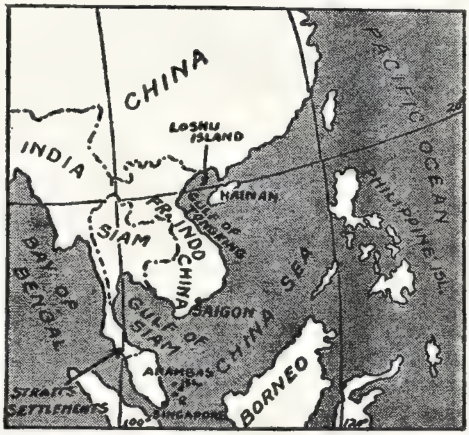
After the fort came the soldiers' barracks, two long barn-like wooden structures on high stilts to keep out the tide and waves in the fierce monsoons. The Americans had built these after the Occupation.

Every evening a while before the big red sun dived into the China Sea to shoot up like a cork next morning in the Pacific Ocean, people of the city strolled along the Street of Many Shades of Hair and the Military Road, a few in fine carriages, very haughty; some in the common *carromata* with the little horses, looking at the Americans curiously; and some on foot.

Among the latter were black-robed friars, coming in groups of twos and threes, sometimes to the number of a dozen. These men were Spaniards and *mestizos*, some shy, some commonplace, some mysterious looking, and at least one, Brother Rolando, unusually sunny and friendly.

It was a colorful evening parade for the soldiers, sitting up on their high-stilted porches, to view. And the newcomers who viewed it this first night with curious eyes were jerked to sharp attention by the unexpected appearance of the white prisoner they had seen at the landing-place.

The man's name was Morflet. Adam Scott had found that out. He came on, an emaciated figure in dirty rags, brazenly swaggering drunk with a native woman on his arm.



"Look!" came an awed exclamation, then in a moment a grunt of disgust—"Ain't it the disgustingest sight you ever saw?"

"Whoo!" squealed Morflet, waving the stick with which he swaggered. "Whoop! White man don' schtick togeth'. Fil'pine people better'n—lime squirtersh 'r Yanks."

He gave the girl an inebriated hug and she giggled. The pair kept on while fascinated, disgusted and bitter eyes followed them.

Just beyond the barracks the high tide, pushed by the wind, was flooding across a low place in the road and pouring into the lagoon within the embrace of the fishhook. When the two reached this Morflet waded in but the girl held back.

"Come on!" thundered the man. "Earn your money!"

He tugged at the girl to draw her into the flood. She held back.

"Come on! Earn the two pesos I paid you to parade up here past these insult-eatin' white fools with me. Come on!"

The girl, at arm's length, tried to twist free. She screamed. Morflet, holding one of her wrists with his left hand, began to slap and claw at her face with his right hand.

Adam Scott, other soldiers, some of the strollers, hurried forward to interfere. Rolando was the first to arrive. He threw his big body between the pair, his beaming pleasant face grim all at once.

The girl, freed from Morflet by the *mestizo* friar, fled back along the street. Morflet turned on Rolando, slapping, clawing. The friar seized his wrists and flung him away.

Morflet staggered into a young palm-tree. Four of the small cannon from the old fort had been set up in the sand to keep careless feet away from the shrub. Morflet snatched at one of these, tried to lift it up for a club to strike Rolando, and though it was one of the smallest he could not get it higher than his waist. He was too used up by dissipation, too weak.

Rolando jerked the cannon away with one hand, and with ease that was almost farcial lifted it above his head and threw it far to one side.

There was a curious thing about this action. It seemed to stand out for all onlookers—that the brown skin man with his calmness and easy strength was far superior to the drunken, angry white man.

Morflet must have felt this. He glared at his master of the moment, his lips drew back in a snarl, he spat words—

"You scum!'"

Morflet in his rage panted and slobbered.

Adam Scott stepped in. Rolando smiled and gave back courteously. Scott seized Morflet by his rags.

"Soft pedal!" the sergeant ordered. "You disgrace to decency, I'll choke ye!"

"I'll kill him!" snarled Morflet. "Showing off his strength on me. The *mestizo*, the half-breed!"

Scott unceremoniously collared him, but Morflet, twisting around, shouted back:

"I *can* lift that cannon! I can club you with it. I'll show you. I'll kill you, you black-robe scum. You're not stronger than me. I'll kill you and prove it."

Two native policemen following the drunken pair down the road, stopped the screaming girl, and one came on to take Morflet in tow. He asked Adam Scott respectfully for the prisoner.

Scott hesitated the fraction of a second at turning over a white man to a brown skin native. Just a perceptible instant. Then he let go his hold of the rags and turned his back. The city officer marched off with his prize. Morflet craned around again and screamed like a man approaching the agony of delirium tremens:

"I'll get him! I'll lift that cannon high enough!"

IV

TO ADAM SCOTT the night seemed heavy, momentous. He stopped uncertainly under the kerosene-lantern hanging on a wooden arm from the wall of the old fort. His broad weather-reddened face—the stern countenance of the trained soldier—was puzzled. Go to bed? Go to town? He could not decide. The voice of "Roily" Greene, sergeant of the guard, hailed him from the darkness back by the arched entry-way of the fort.

"Hey, bo, I'll bet you're thinking about going down to the American Bar and swatting the drought!"

"No, no," denied Scott absently.

"Oh, all right then, old prohibition."

Greene strolled off in another direction. Scott filled his old bulldog pipe. He decided after all to go on to the American Bar. Old pals might be there. He set out, more uneasy than leisurely.

The night's voices told him that something was impending. The fear came from more than a drunken man's brawling and threatening; from more than the baiting of a white prisoner by native boys. His fear came from the significance of that baiting. White man's civilization, white man himself, seemed somehow imperiled.

The voices of two Filipino men sitting on the low sea-wall drifted to his ears and away again as he passed them—

"The boys flipped pebbles at the white man."

"They should have thrown stones!"

"*Sssst!* We'll be heard!"

"Faugh, who cares? The Americans' hold on the Island is slipping."

The words stabbed Scott. He stopped sharply, tempted to arrest the speakers. The act seemed beyond his province however. He went on. After all it was merely the gabble of two fearful natives. The cure was not in correcting them, but in correcting white men's talk and ways, perhaps.

Two soldiers, men from Scott's own company, passed, talking avidly—

"—get that white fellow out of jail."

"Sure, 'nough? Say, we'll show these dusky birds right off the bat that they can't monkey with white men. Hey?"

"*Ssst!* Not so loud!"

Adam Scott was amused. In twenty-five years of soldering he had never known soldiers to fight except among themselves or on actual battle-lines. But let 'em talk about a jail release if it amused them!

The old soldier passed from the reservation road into the Street of Many Shades of Hair. Houses were lighted. There was music here and there, the wailing of a high voice again. Some of the black friars turned under a street-light on ahead and went toward the beach a block distant. From former days here, Scott knew they would follow the sandy shore around to their monastery.

Scott turned in after the strollers for the sake of the brisk wind in the open space of the beach. He stood a while where the tide lapped and listened to the swift flowing of the troubled waters not forty feet out. These outrigger canoes lying here—shove one out half a stone's throw and it would be whisked away.

The wish came absurdly that he could put the trouble-making Morflet into one of the canoes and shove him off.

This thought changed to sorrow for the fellow. He needed white men to stick by him and help him out of his trouble. For a whimsical moment or two Scott's sympathies were with the soldiers who juggled with the idea of a jail delivery for Morflet.

Adam Scott, heading again for the American Bar without enthusiasm, passed a row of shops near the street of foreign residences. In one of the shops he saw a dim light and a set of stooping shoulders. He entered and an old man reading proof-sheets by the light of a hot oil-lamp got up. The two shook hands warmly.

"Still printing the best English language paper south of Manila," declared the old man whimsically.

"Say, Waggard," said Scott, "what can you tell me about this man Morflet?"

"Why? What do you want to know?" Waggard peered quizzically over his spectacles. "Something about 'white man' I'll be bound."

"Is he an American?"

"I don't know. Thought once he was a fellow Australian, but didn't establish that. British consul tried to find out about him. Lemuel, the red-haired clerk, was telling me about it today. Seems Morflet went to the southern islands about four months ago from Manila or Hongkong. He had money. He drank and roistered around and got himself sentenced to jail for a quarter, in Zamboanga I believe.

"The fellow seemed to think that when he got into trouble every white man in reach should rush to his rescue. But to his surprize and chagrin, I suppose, the Americans did no such thing. Imagine Morflet had been souring against white men, because they didn't stick by him and his misdeeds down here in the Orient, and that his three months in durance finally finished him. Says he's out to everlastingly disgrace the white man over here—and I suppose, Adam Scott, that that gets under your skin like a burr in a saddle-blanket?"

"Have you talked with him, by any chance?" asked the soldier.

"Half a minute. He came in here for a job. Said he was the best type-slinger that ever learned the trade. But he was unbathed—he stunk, and he trembled. He must——"

"Hasn't he any self-respect? If he had we might get hold of him."

"He must have seen the disgust I felt. I told him too that I did not want a drunken hand mixing up my cases. If you had seen him you would have thought of self-respect. He gave me his back and strutted out without a word. Suppose he still has some money left."

"He showed a streak of that a while ago. Threatening one of the friars. Tried to pick up one of those little cannon and strike him, and couldn't lift it high enough. The brother took it easy and threw it aside. It seemed to shame Morflet, to gouge his self-respect, that a man of another race was stronger than him."

"But even at that," Waggard countered, "he isn't the sort to listen to good advice. Doubt you could rescue him by his pride. He's bad."

"And a menace," declared the soldier, "to white man's law and order. He was arrested again, a bit ago. Drunk and beating a native girl. He'll be baited again in the streets. That is seed which might grow into a tangling vine, might start actual unrest."

"*Might!*" exclaimed Waggard. "You come with me. I'll show you something to startle you!"

V

WAGGARD, the editor, gestured to Sergeant Adam Scott with an ink-stained, bony forefinger and led him through a back shop reeking with gasoline and ink and the fresh odor of paper, and out at a back door into an alley.

The night was utterly black here. The news man got hold of the chevroned sleeve to guide the sergeant.

"Sometimes," said Waggard, "I come to work through this maze of little streets. Know the way pretty well. There's a clutter of bamboo shacks up here inside an ancient cement wall where a trouble-making bunch of natives gather. It's called La Cercia's Nest, or the Mockingbird's Nest. You'll see something there, likely."

They advanced cautiously through the thick night. It seemed more than ever to Scott that danger lurked. He could not recall when it seemed so poignant except in the days and nights of fighting around Manila.

Danger actually seemed to moisten the low-hanging ends of the mango branches where they touched his face now and then.

After a time Waggard whispered that they were approaching La Cercia's Nest. A small open fire first shone through the wind-blown banana-plants. They found themselves against a low wall. Men variously clothed in white cotton, or naked to the waist, and barefoot, squatted around the blaze, chattering and laughing shrilly. Women sat back, some on a well curbing, some on the ground. Bare breasts and suckling babes showed in the flickering light.

Adam Scott knew enough of the tongue to understand the drift of the talk. Likewise the editor, from his remarks. Only the louder talk could be heard above the wind and the rustle of the banana blades.

"Hear them?" whispered Waggard. "They're saying that the white man will never quit coming—that this day old ones left and new ones came. The old fellow is charging them that they'll never be a free and independant people."

"They mentioned Morflet."

"Aye, the hissing and taunting of that fellow, it has set them to an uncontrollable itching. It sics them on. They're a good people, but simple, mere children yet."

"But this," whispered Adam Scott, "may burst out into something nasty. Like attacking one of our sentries or stoning some white civilian."

"They'll do just something of that sort," agreed the editor. "Then it will frighten them and they will settle down. They're just children."

"But in the meantime——"

The two men abruptly gave their whole attention to a woman who stepped into the light of the fire. She was brown of skin, with unkept hair and a dirty face—a gross, savage thing of the flesh more than of the spirit.

"La Cercia," whispered Waggard. "She's a wild agitator."

The woman, with glinting eye and evil mouth, began a torrent of words. This was in dialect more than Spanish and the listeners by the wall understood but little. She broke off abruptly to sing, or wail, and from her throat issued the high, outlandish cadence that had caught Scott's ear before on this night, and that was half-lamentation and half-defiance.

A man near the fire leaped up and began to sway in time to the rhythm.

Waggard plucked at the sergeant's sleeve.

"We've seen it all," he whispered. "Let us go back."

At the shop again, the editor made comment.

"Morflet is at the bottom of this—his being taunted and mocked in the streets. Being arrested again he will be mocked again. Things will grow worse."

Adam Scott drummed absently on a type case with his fingers, showing how unsettled his mind was about what should be done.

"Well," said he at last, "there's one rule I hold to—that white men have got to stick together."

"You're right."

Scott went to the door to depart. He was heavy with doubt.

"But what sticking together is in this case," he added, "I don't yet see."

He passed out into the windy, impenetrable darkness.

VI

OUTSIDE the editor's door Adam Scott paused, uncertain even where to go. The American Bar held no lure for him now.

Deep in thought he went toward the beach, not far distant. The great mango-trees in the wind tugged at their roots as if to be free. Adam Scott was like that—he wanted the mental freedom that an answer to the riddle of how to proceed would bring to him.

But after all, he thought when he stood at the edge of the wet sand, the white man's burden of civilization and progress was not his to juggle and shift and finally settle comfortably for the ages. It was up to him only to do his duty—but his duty and no less.

He filled his pipe. To light it out of the wind he went behind a bamboo clump that bulked beside the beach path. He pressed well into it to escape the eddies of air—and struck his foot against some metal object that gave off a blunt ringing.

Out of curiosity Scott stopped and struck the match on the metal, and beheld one of the tiny cannon from the old fort, a cannon apparently no different from the one Morflet had tried to club Rolando with. It lay on top of the loose sand. He thought it might have been dropped there within the hour, or day.

Smoking, thinking, in no hurry, Adam Scott started to return to the garrison, wondering that if when he arrived he would find the little cannon where Rolando with his clean, free strength had flung it.

At Quartermaster Street, which divided the city and the reservation, it occurred to the thorough-going and thoughtful soldier to find the most isolated of the American sentries and give him a friendly word. He might be some young fellow standing guard for the first time in a foreign land. A word or two might lower an unpleasant tension in him.

Many quartermaster's buildings lay along and back from the street. A maze of alleys and aisles known by the soldiers by the sweet-sounding name of the Quartermaster's Gut ran among the buildings. Scott began to pause at the mouths of the alleys to listen for the rattle of the sentry's rifle, the smack of the gun-strap, or the racket of shoes on the cobbles.

But instead of these familiar sounds to tell him where the sentry strolled there came the light scuff of bare, lurking feet—which meant one thing, natives.

The thought popped into his mind that already they might have boloed the sentry!

He debated whether to call out, or try to seize the natives there whispering now in the blackness, or to run to the corner and call the guard.

Shifting slightly to get his back against the wall of a building a foot slipped on the round cobbles. He barely saved himself from falling. There in the cañon-alley the noise was like shod horses.

He heard the natives leap away, their bare feet spatting on the dust that lay in the city alley they followed.

Adam Scott stood still, breathless. A man, bolder than the others, might yet be lurking with upraised bolo. Or the sentry might be poised to fire.

The seconds ticked off. Here away from the wind he could actually hear his watch tick, could hear the blood in his throat. Other than these sounds there was nothing save thick night.

Where could the sentry be? What had happened?

Scott decided to call. He spoke cautiously, guardedly—

"Sentry!"

"Oh!" said a relieved voice almost within reach. "It's you, sarg. I was wonderin' whether to blam away at you or not."

"Never shoot without challenging," admonished Scott, wiping sweat from his brow with one sleeve. "What's happened anyhow?"

"Nothing, yet. Some of these barefooted gugus have been stalking me. Didn't know whether it was just one of their friendly little habits or not, seeing this is my first night in gugu-land."

"Don't take any chances," warned Scott. "They might whack you with a coconut splitting bolo. I'm going to find out what they were after if I can."

VII

THE stocky soldier hurried along the narrow street by which the three pairs, at least, of bare feet had fled. If natives actually meant to attack an American sentry the situation had progressed further than he had really supposed.

The night was so dark that he could not see the uneven and narrow sidewalk. The Mockingbird's Nest was only a half-dozen short blocks distant. Oli-Oli, though a city in political and commercial importance, was not large. The main plaza and public buildings were only another half-dozen blocks beyond La Cercia's.

As Adam Scott made his way, keeping an eye out for the right street, he heard running feet, this time shod feet. Two soldiers came into speaking reach of him, dog trotting along the roadway.

"Idea," said one of them, "is to surround the jail and stone the windows."

"Huh, that won't get Morflet out."

"We'll capture the jailer and make him unlock the joint."

"Now you're talkin'! White men have got to stick together, hey, bo?"

"I'll say!"

The men passed. Even the soldiers' angle of the situation was developing more than Adam Scott had thought possible. He was tempted to let the native angle go and follow the soldiers, but decided that he would lose only a few minutes by going past La Cercia's first, then hurrying on to the city jail.

He kept on toward the female agitator's place, and shortly approached the low wall where he and Waggard not three-quarters of an hour before had listened.

The woman was swaying and sing-songing triumphantly. Tense excitement was in the throng. Three barefoot native men, two of them armed with bolos, stood beside the woman. She was gesturing toward them dramatically.

"Praising them because they tried to bolo an American sentry," he thought contemptuously, feeling instinctively that they were the stalkers at the warehouses. "Encouraging them to go and commit murder."

It popped into his mind that he should inform the native provincial authorities, or the American military authorities. But the latter were as new as himself to the situation, all having been ashore less than nine hours. Besides, if the soldiers were gathering at the jail he had better get there without delay.

He stole away from the wall and made for the city prison.

The dignified edifice, with its wide unclosed front doorway, came first into his range of vision across the plaza. No maddened mob was in sight or hearing. Scott slacked his swift pace, panting a little, feeling that he had been sold.

But a gang of soldiers should be around somewhere, gabbling and threatening and holding back.

Scott crossed the plaza without hearing a chirp, and the street, and went half-way up the wide, low stairway of the jail. A light burned in the corridor. Three cotton-clad natives stood under an adjacent porch looking at him. That was all—until he turned around and scanned the dim-lighted plaza, and there he saw that which held him in his tracks.

A knot of men was emerging from the shadows of the trees. Vague street light showed the silhouette of military caps, the outline of American soldiers. They came running toward the jail in a little thunder of feet.

They numbered at least twenty—a wolfish pack for one man to face, but Sergeant Adam Scott stood his ground grimly.

A stone cracked against the cement stairway. A shower of stones whirred over Scott's head and popped on the facade of the building to his rear.

"Hold up there!" bawled the sergeant. "Stop that!"

The pack checked up in front of him, surprized.

"Thought you was Lotter!" exclaimed one. "When he got up here we were to advance—come on, men! Get inside!"

The score of soldiers moved forward, splitting and starting around Scott. The non-commissioned officer ran up the stairs and threw himself about in the wide doorway.

"Keep back, men!" he bawled. "I'll get the gang of ye bobtailed for this! Stop where ye are!"

Some stopped grudgingly, others drew into the shadows.

"Get out of the way yourself, Adam Scott!" sang out the soldier who had spoken at the foot of the steps. "You don't boss the whole world."

"Shut up, you? Are you the ringleader of this?"

That "ring-leader" took the man back a bit.

"But listen, sergeant," he protested less boisterously, "there's a white man here in this gugu jail. The bird they had white-wingin' the wharf today."

"Well, what about it?"

"They'll work him again."

The men hung on the reply. Scott believed their statement was true. And he knew that if Morflet was baited again in the streets that the natives would become more agitated than ever, more stirred up by the sight and by the lashing on of such as La Cercia. Already they had been roused to the attempted boloing of an American sentry. A wheel of genuine, imminent danger spun now around the dissipated, contemptible white prisoner here within these walls. If the fellow were only eliminated—Adam Scott was thinking.

"Listen, sergeant," pleaded the spokesman. "White men have got to stick together."

Adam Scott's own fetish thrown back at him!

"Sure, white men have got to stick together!" seconded a man in the shadows.

"Sure! Sure!" came other shouts.

Adam Scott, the old campaigner, looked alertly about him. The three natives on the porch had been augmented by several more, with a Chinese or two, and had drawn nearer. They were grinning, laughing. Scott was puzzled by their boldness. But he turned from the matter for the time being to the soldiers.

"Yes, men, you're right," he declared. "Absolutely right. White men *have* got to stick together."

"Now you're gettin' right," some one called. "Shoot again, you're faded!"

"White men have got to be protected," Scott went on. "We've got to stand by the white man's civilization, haven't we? His—or our—laws, and justice, and educational system, and code of ethics, and honor and traditions. Am I right?"

"Sure, you bet you're right!"

"Let's go! Let's get Morflet out!"

"Wa-a-ait a minute!" admonished Scott. "Do you know what it would mean for us to get Morflet out? Do ye? It would mean over-riding our own traditions of justice and fair play. It would mean making trouble for other white men—perhaps getting some lone school-teacher, or officer of Constabulary at some remote *barrio*, assassinated. It would mean injuring our prestige all over these islands, It might mean a nasty fight right here, with natives and our comrades, white men, getting shot down or cut down. Is that standing by white men? Hey, is it? Answer me!"

The answer was an uneasy shuffling of feet.

Adam Scott, the wary, looked around to see that no enemy drew in from the sides. The native group was wriggling and grinning in that unexplainable amusement. A man, an official of the prison apparently, had come to the wide doorway behind the stocky sergeant. He stood there, and though he had a revolver in his hand he seemed kindly intentioned. Adam Scott faced back to the soldiers of H and G companies.

"Get out of here!" he ordered. "Go back to barracks! Or be about your business!"

A shifting of feet, of figures in the half-light, began. Scott turned his back on the soldiers and looked at the man with the gun.

"You did splendidly, sergeant," complimented that man, his manner kindly and genuine. "But they could not have got Morflet out. Morflet furnished bail an hour ago and was released—some special political maneuver, I know not what."

The knot of natives giggled and laughed now with a note of mockery. And Adam Scott realized the cause of their amusement. They had known Morflet was out. They had been laughing at the soldiers bent unknowingly on an empty mission. They had been laughing at Scott making a useless defense.

They had been laughing at Americans, white men! Adam Scott did not resent that merely because of the fact itself. But he saw danger in the jest. And he beheld Morflet as the cause of the whole bad situation. One thought went through his mind:

"White men must stick together."

VIII

ADAM SCOTT decided that the first step was to find Morflet. What the next step would be he had no idea. He went the short distance from the jail to the American Bar, thinking the man might have put in there. As the sergeant entered the place his eye fell upon an old friend—a former soldier comrade who had a pawn-shop on Guimeras Island. The friend caught sight of Scott and got to his feet.

"Hi, Adam Scott!" he half-shouted.

"I'm glad to set eye on you! Didn't know you belonged to the recruit doughboy outfit that got in today."

"Watches!" responded Scott, using a nickname. "You haven't changed a hair."

"Have a glass o' slush with me, ol'-timer."

"No, I'm in a kind of a push. I want some information."

"Sit down, sit down. Can't talk standing."

"I'll do that. What I want to know is this: Have you seen this man Morflet in the last hour?"

"Say!" Watches talked by exclamations. "You're a shake and a half too late! He was here a half-hour ago—that is, outside of this place running amuck."

"Again!"

"He drove up in a *carromata*, and when he got down he grabbed the driver's whip and began to lash blindly among the people on the crowded sidewalk, cutting and slashing."

"Good lord! What's the matter with him?"

"Drag me, I don't know! But say! I can tell you what's *going* to be the matter with him. He's got the goats of these people, officials and all. He'll be worked in the streets again, and he'll be tormented until he will wish by preference he was staked out with Jersey mosquitoes and no shirt."

"The police arrested him?"

"No. He shoved the driver off the seat of the *carromata*, hopped up himself, and went tearing down the streets, lashing the pony to a fare-you-well. The police are out looking for him, all right."

"Watches," said Scott soberly, "it's a whole lot worse than just Morflet getting hazed."

"I'll say! The little brown brothers have worked themselves up to an edge already. Some of 'em getting whipped and slashed in the street just now will make 'em all buzz like bees. It'll amount to just this—some lone white man will get a crick in the neck from a swung bolo—and he won't have no more head left than the Venus dee Milo."

"It's her arms that are missing, ain't it? Er legs."

"Well, anyhow," added Watches dolefully, "Morflet is making it kind of tough for things white. And white men ought to stick together."

In the pause Adam Scott ran his eye over the big room. A few tables were occupied by a sprinkling of Americans in loose khaki, a few soldiers, sea-going foreigners, three or four immaculate, dignified *mestizos* in white duck, with colored bands around their hats, and gold-mounted sticks.

As Scott appraised he became aware of a listening attitude over the guests—and became further aware of a muffled, far-away racket in the streets. It became louder and louder but no clearer as to its cause.

Then suddenly a furore of screechings and squallings and shouts broke through the night.

The crowd in the American Bar rushed for the several swinging doors. When Adam Scott reached the sidewalk, with Watches at his elbow, he beheld a *carromata* being driven along the street, half upon the sidewalk, half in the street, the driver cursing at the top of his voice and lashing the pony at every jump.

It was a wild spectacle. Pedestrians dodged and tripped and sprawled, or stood mesmerized with fear. The driver, not content with harrassing one side of the street only, swerved to the other side, and sent the crowd racing with long steps and squawks like chickens.

"Whoopee!" yelled the wild charioteer. "Look out for the white man's juggernaut!"

The *carromata*, swaying on one wheel, swept close to the line of patrons of the American Bar along the narrow sidewalk. The mad driver lashed viciously with his whip. One of the *mestizos* slapped a hand over his cheek and grunted. The cart careened on in its breakneck journey down the street, leaving a spoor of curses and howls.

"It's Morflet!" groaned Adam Scott.

"Say!" exclaimed Watches. "Did I say the little brown brothers would buzz like bees! Like wasps, and you couldn't blame 'em! For the sake o' white men, somebody ought to lay a rock on Morflet's dome!"

"Where's a *carromata*?" demanded Scott. "I'm going to catch that fool degenerate. His career is about ended!"

IX

THE *cocheros* of Oli-Oli were no different from those of Hongkong or Honolulu or Timbuktu—when wanted quickly they seemed not to be handy. Adam Scott was compelled to hunt around and he lost five minutes before he found a *carromata*. With Morflet out of sight now, the soldier could only take the general direction of that wild man's flight. He directed the *cochero* to the American garrison. Morflet might be there, or might be seen *en route*.

Scott's equipage turned in on the Street of Many Shades of Hair. He kept an eye out for each bobbing lantern on a vehicle, and had his driver turn in closely to scan the occupants as well as might be in the darkness. By the time they reached the edge of the reservation Scott could not tell whether they had passed Morflet or not.

With something else in mind for the moment, Scott drove on to the fort and barracks. He had the driver turn back at that point where Morflet and Rolando had struggled for a moment. Scott got down and felt about for the little cannon where Rolando had flung it. It was not there. To make certain, he went over the ground again, striking matches. The iron club was gone and that under the bamboo bush was certainly it.

Driving back, Adam Scott stopped at the guard-house and inquired of Roily Greene whether he had seen or heard anything of Morflet in that neighborhood. The sergeant of the guard had not. Scott volunteered no explanation but hurried on.

When midway the length of the street of foreign residences, at the cross-street which turned off and led to the beach—the route of the friars—the *carromata* was hailed from the darkness of the sidewalk, hailed persistently.

"Turn in," directed the American to his driver.

He who had hailed started to get into the cart the instant it stopped, then perceived the occupant.

"Pardon!" he exclaimed. "I didn't see you. I was eager to get a carriage. I——"

"Why, it's Brother Rolando," said Scott. "If you are in a hurry you may take this rig, sir."

"Thank you, soldier. I—perhaps I'm more upset than in a hurry."

"Has something happened?"

"Something puzzling, yes."

Adam Scott's experience in the world told him that men unused to the protection of an institution—soldiers themselves for that matter—were often at a loss to explain events. He saw that the friar was really troubled. He got out of the *carromata* and said courteously:

"Perhaps I could help straighten you out, Brother, if I knew what was wrong. The rig is yours if you want it."

The black-robed man must have felt that something was due for this kindliness. Apologetically he explained that a short time before a scribbled note had been left for him at the monastery by an unknown person. The note bore the message that an old native had been run down and injured by a drunken white man driving a carriage recklessly through the streets, and that he was pleading for the presence of Brother Rolando.

"The message added," explained the friar, "that the injured man had been a friend of my father. I was to find him in the rear of this house here, a servant. The directions were positive. As we came through the streets I heard talk of a drunken foreigner's injudicious driving. That bore out the message, and I urged my *cochero*. Arriving here I dismissed him and sought the servants' quarters, but they insist that all of their number was present and that nobody they know has been hurt. It—it is puzzling, to say the least, sir."

Suspicion flowed through Adam Scott's mind. Was this a trick of Morflet's to get a chance at Rolando?

"I'll tell you," said the soldier, "the address after all might have been wrong. If you are really wanted another messenger probably will arrive soon at the monastery. If you are there you will then lose no time. Here, sir, get in and have the driver hurry."

As Scott paid the driver, and slipped in an extra coin for the friar's fare, Rolando and another black robe whom Scott had not noticed—he understood they always traveled in parties of two or more—climbed into the *carromata* and were off.

Adam Scott's stocky figure went tramping around the corner and along the side street to the beach to see what he could see.

As it happened, he felt before he saw, for he ran into a *carromata* and a drooping horse. The animal stood with its head in a bunch of shrubbery while the vehicle was well within the yard of the house there. Had the night been less dark Scott would not have got off the path and stumbled into the telltale record of a murder plan.

It seemed to the soldier that he saw it clearly. Somehow the half-crazed Morflet had got the old cannon up here to the bamboo bush. Perhaps he had attended to that as soon as he was released under bail. Then he had got a note to Rolando. Probably he was returning from that trip when he drove pellmell along the streets. He had evaded other traffic and his pursuers and turned off to this street, believing evidently that in returning to the monastery the friar might walk back by this customary route. The impulse would be to walk—a puzzling situation, a pleasant night; right beside the inviting path, so to speak. Morflet had been shrewd in his wickedness!

As he thought at these things, Scott had stood quietly beside the vehicle, thinking perhaps to hear a footstep or perceive the black bulk of the returning driver. But neither hearing nor seeing any one, he made for the clump of bushes where he had stumbled on to the cannon.

He approached cautiously, his ears gathering in the sounds. The bamboo clump was threshed by the wind, its canes cracking together now and then like bones. The outrigger of a canoe, tied to a stake, slapped on the water. The roar of the waves and the terrific flow of the current in the strait overwhelmed most sounds.

Scott did not believe that he could either see or hear Morflet, were he concealed there, so he began a stealthy approach with extended hands.

And when he had got to the place where the cannon had been he realized that neither man nor iron club was there. He felt about further—struck the cannon with his foot, at least two yards from where he had seen it first. He struck a match. The ancient black and rusty cylinder of old-time warfare lay half-sticking up in the loose sand, where it had been dropped.

Scott could imagine Morflet, becoming impatient with waiting, flinging the club down and going to see what delayed Rolando.

Taking a cue from this, the soldier went back toward the main thoroughfare, to find Morflet. But he did not hear or see the man. When he reached the place where he had surrendered his *carromata* to the friar he found an old native pottering about in the darkness.

"Ay, *señor*," drawled the old fellow, "has the good Brother Rolando departed, do you know?"

Scott felt that the question was merely an excuse for being there, or to start up talk. He said that Rolando had left, and in turn asked if a white man in rags had been seen to pass.

"Does the *señor* refer to he who until the close of this day was a prisoner shoveling dirt in the streets?"

"That's the fellow, old man. Was he here?"

"Aye, he came out of the darkness asking in my startled ear if Rolando had come and gone, or something like that. I told him I did not know. Which was true, Señor Soldier. I was in the yard of this house and did not hear the brother depart, but only heard sounds and imagined."

"How long since Morflet—the ragged white man—was here?"

"Oh, aye, I——"

Adam Scott felt the despair of the brown man at this question of time. White men talk in minutes on the face of a watch. Natives, unused to watches, talk of the passage of the sun over a dial, or in terms of walking, or sailing.

"I do not know, *señor*, as you ask. Pardon, sir. But if he has kept walking as he left me he may now be two blocks hence, or four."

"Which way did he go?"

"In the direction that Brother Rolando would have gone homeward in a *carromata*."

So Morflet was lost to him again, Scott felt. He pondered what next to do, and decided that it would be only a fair act to get the drooping pony and *carromata* back to the plaza or jail where they could be found more easily by the owner.

The thought fathered the act and presently he was driving along on the little front seat feeling a bit foolish and glad that it was night.

He had decided to leave the outfit in the shadows of the plaza rather than at the jail, and was turning in under a lamp when two men of his company stepped aside for him to pass. They stared at him. He hoped they would not think that he was drunk. When he was past he heard them snicker, and he flushed.

The vehicle and pony cached where they would be found, the soldier decided that he had done sufficient in looking after Morflet, since Morflet was not to be found, and started afoot toward the garrison. Yet he was not satisfied. Morflet might go prowling at the monastery to find Rolando—or do forty other bad things.

He stopped to reconsider. By chance he stopped under a dim street light, and by further chance he was near the shop of Waggard, the editor. A voice hailed him—

"Oh, soldier, I say!"

"Well?"

Adam Scott faced the speaker, a young bare-headed red-haired fellow with the unexplainable but unmistakable marks of a Britisher about him.

"I'm Mr. Lemuel at the British consulate," he said, speaking with some hurry in his manner. "The man Morflet—do you know who I mean? Well, the natives have captured him and taken him to a place called La Cercia's Nest. They're a bit soured on him, the natives are. I think—I feel that we'd better go to his rescue. Are you game?"

X

A BELATED, nearly full moon was breaking over the tree-tops, but was not yet pushing out the blackness beneath the mangos and bananas. Lemuel and Adam Scott dog-trotted side by side toward La Cercia's.

"I don't know how the natives got the fellow." Lemuel kept up his running talk. "Must have nabbed him in the street somewhere. I listened at the enclosure wall for a jiffy and heard them trying to extort a confession that he had tried to trick and assassinate Rolando, the friar. It appears some of the brown boys saw the white fellow take a cannon to a place of concealment—I don't quite understand——"

Lemuel was panting by now, as well as puzzled. Scott did not attempt an explanation, being too concerned in watching his step.

When they were yet a block from the Nest they all but collided with a man running in their direction, and made out the dim outline of the tall, stooped Waggard.

"Ah!" exclaimed the editor in vast relief. "I'm glad to find you thus together. Going to my quarters a bit ago I discovered the natives at the Nest torturing the man Morflet. I think we had best hurry or we might be too late."

When the three, running and somewhat winded, reached the low wall that enclosed the natives' little common, they beheld an uncivilized and torturous procedure.

The act was that facetiously referred to by some Filipinos as "hemp twisting." But what was twisted was a man's arms and body.

Ropes were bound tightly about Morflet's wrists. These were about eight feet in length. The ends were tied to short sticks. Two natives on each side of Morflet had hold of these sticks and were twisting the ropes, which in turn were twisting Morflet's arms, seemingly almost out of their sockets.

The gross woman La Cercia stood before Morflet, venting a hurricane of furious words, among which the listeners caught the charge that the white man had whipped Filipino men, women and children in the streets with a *cochero's* lash, and had attempted to murder Rolando, the friar.

"It's a lie, a lie!" squealed Morflet, dropping to his knees in agony from the twisting ropes. "Oh, stop, stop!"

A gale of laughter arose at this plea.

"It's what comes of a fool white man and the natives baiting him," whispered the cool Waggard. "We've got to do something quick!"

"We'll try an old-time tactic," answered Scott. "We will pretend there's armed men. Waggard, you get into the shrubbery to their right; and Lemuel, to their left. Let's go!"

"You mean to face them alone?"

Waggard laid hands on Scott, holding back.

"They'll knife you, man! These people are running amuck."

Scott shook off the hands and threw himself across the breast-high wall, then on over to the other side, with never a word further. And the Britisher and the Australian followed.

Waggard and Lemuel went right and left, while Adam Scott strode stockily up to the backs of the ring of brown men. He could not see Morflet because of the crowd around him, and because Morflet was down. Scott planted himself and bawled out—

"Stand aside!"

The natives flung around, shrank back, opened a way to the twisted, cringing white man, who was stripped to the waist.

La Cercia held her ground belligerently in front of Morflet.

"Turn—that—man—loose!" thundered Scott, pointing with outflung arm.

"Stand fast!" shrilled La Cercia to her people. "Seize the soldier. Tie and gag him!"

Those who held the ropes on Morflet did

not budge, but others moved in toward Scott. The sergeant dramatically stepped back and shouted into the jungle on his right—

"Corporal on the right, are you there with your men?"

"Aye, I'm here, sir!" answered Waggard startlingly.

"Corporal on the left?"

"I'm ready!" shouted Lemuel.

"Place your men to fire on the enemy!"

It was farcical. Even in the midst of it, with the necessity that the natives be fooled, Adam Scott felt the humor of it pink him.

And the trick had its effect. The natives stared at the bushes in awe. The gross, wrathful woman was uncertain.

Scott lost not a second. He drew out his pocket-knife and slashed the twisted ropes in two. He jerked the groaning, trembling Morflet to his feet, and without even glancing at the natives further, dragged and helped the poor fellow to the wall. There he literally threw him over and followed after.

In the dark back street he whispered:

"We've got to run for it. There's no soldiers there."

Morflet groaned in physical and mental agony.

"I can't run. I'm twisted apart!"

But he did run, with Scott's dragging. They were joined in a moment by Waggard, and two or three minutes later—by the time they had got two blocks or so away—by the red-haired Britisher.

"They've discovered the trick," called Lemuel. "They're scattering out to hunt, mad as wasps."

"Save me, save me!" begged Morflet in sudden terror.

A shouting rose on the wind. It was like the howling of a pack of wolves in pursuit. A waving torch became visible, far up the street along which they had just fled.

"White men have got to stick together," said Adam Scott. "Waggard, can't you hide us in your shop till the squall blows over?"

"I'll try. Come along. We'll have to hurry!"

XI

THE moon now whitened the east and west streets. It was necessary to follow one lying in this direction to get to the newspaper shop. The trio, helping Morflet, tried to keep along an iron fence under the tree shadows.

They had gone only a short distance when they became aware of a part of the mob yowling down the street toward them.

"We're cut off from the shop!" cried Waggard. "Come along or we will be cornered."

They turned at right angles and fled along a street that would bring them to the thoroughfare of the foreign dwellings—British consulate and the like.

When the four, Morflet now making a terrific effort, arrived at the important street, that was the main road to the Army garrison, they turned to their left and kept on for a block, Scott urging that they try to make the reservation and if possible the old stone fort.

"They're on a rampage sure enough!" puffed the stocky sergeant.

"They'll kill some of us in their childishness!"

"Morflet, at least!"

As they arrived at the corner where Scott had given Rolando his *carromata* they came upon a huddle of natives who did not seem aware of what was going on. They stole back into the shadows of their yard.

But far worse, a little handful of the mob—at least a clump of shouting, running natives—was coming along the wide street from the direction of the garrison.

"We're cut off there now!" cried out Scott, and added— "Unless we fight our way through."

"Don't, don't!" beeseeched Morflet, scarcely able to stand. "I can't fight. My arms are twisted."

They glanced at his arms. The ropes that he had been twisted with still trailed from his wrists. He had his arms up in a supplicating position, and he was shaking from head to foot.

"They'd probably get him," said Waggard.

"Let's get to the beach," suggested Scott. "Let's hide along the beach. They're likely to get all of us. If I had my pistol——"

They started toward the spot, a block away, where lay the cannon at the lurking place.

"No, no," begged Morflet, "not that way!"

"Come on, or you're done for!"

"Oh, oh, I couldn't have killed him!" the fellow wailed. "I couldn't have lifted the cannon high enough!"

He seemed pitifully remorseful.

They set out to run, but because of Morflet their progress was slower than ever. The man fell down twice and could scarcely keep to his legs.

"Booze and hate have about done for him," said Scott.

When they got to the water's edge and started along the beach in the direction of the reservation they once more found themselves hemmed in, only this time the yelling natives seemed to be on both sides as well as to the rear of them. They were not coming swiftly. They were searching as they advanced, watching sharply ahead.

"Think they've got us surrounded," explained Adam Scott. "That huddle of natives at the corner told which way we went."

They got into the shrubbery of the yard where Scott had earlier found the drooping pony and the *carromata,* a few yards from the fierce water and the slapping outrigger canoes. It was a rat-hole, a place for the last stand. They looked and listened a moment.

All at once Lemuel laughed out merrily.

"Pardon the amusement," said he, "but the bloomin' pot we've got into makes me laugh."

"Eh?" said Scott.

"You see, it's this way, Yank. If they catch us we're jolly well done for. At least our friend Morflet here. And if I manage to squeak out of the pinch the old man will do for me."

"The old man?"

"The consul, I mean. He's frightfully stiff—set against such affairs as this. Dreadfully careful of international brawls. He'd ship me home on the next boat with a dishonorable discharge."

"It's simpler than that with me," said Waggard. "If the natives found out I'd been in this there'd never another one turn a hand in my shop. Oh, well——"

Over the noises of the night there came a shout:

"Corporal of the guard, Number Four! A mob! A mob! Help!"

"The sentry at the warehouses calling," said Scott. "Soldiers will come pretty quick if we can hold out."

"Hold out!" exclaimed Lemuel. "The beggars aren't a stone's flip away now!"

"You're right," admitted Adam Scott grudgingly. "They'll have us in a minute or two— They'll kill Morflet."

Morflet, sitting on the ground swaying his body and groaning, began to chatter at this.

Adam Scott spoke sharply, decisively:

"White men have got to stick together. I see a way out. If we don't use it Morflet will be killed. And we'll be guilty. Or he'll be taken again, and that is fully as bad—street baiting for him, and row raising and getting white men into trouble all over the Island, and maybe killing off a few remote ones."

"That's granted!" snapped Waggard. "What have you in mind?"

Morflet ceased his groaning and his shaking and looked up at the soldier. In their silence they heard the chatter of the angry natives closing in.

Suddenly, fiercely, Adam Scott stooped and picked Morflet up in his arms. He strode through the fringe of brush into the moonlight and dropped his burden into one of the outrigger canoes.

"Lie there!" he ordered.

Quickly he cut the ropes from Morflet's wrists, and with one of them bound the man's ankles together.

"You can't swim with your legs tied together," said Scott. "You won't dare to jump overboard. You can untie the knot in a minute, but you will be too far from shore then to go over the side. Coward or no coward, you'll have to take your chance with the canoe and God."

Morflet lay still looking up at Adam Scott. Facing the ultimate he changed curiously—the extent of the change being apparent only when he spoke with startling calm.

"I'm not a coward," he said slowly. "The chance you give is better than that out there." Then he added fiercely: "There's one regret. That black *mestizo* showing me up—being stronger than a white man. I'd liked to have out-done him!"

The fierce roar of the waters, their heaping up and troubling, out there under the great moon, came to them solemnly.

Adam Scott, being of the little red schoolhouse breed was also of the little white church with a steeple breed, and being terribly, calmly moved now, he felt that something more was due.

"Morflet," said he, with an outstretched arm as in a blessing, "let God divide between right and wrong. If you deserve life out there you will find it at His hands. If you deserve—otherwise, evil will settle the account."

Adam Scott dropped two oars into the canoe. He bent to shove it into the water. He looked back to see if Waggard and Lemuel were to help, to have a hand in this matter. The two men understood. They bent along the little vessel and it went sliding into the sea.

Scott waded out pushing the canoe until he was up to his knees. Then he felt the suck of the current and the tide catch hold and draw the craft out of his hand with its invisible, mighty force. With incredible swiftness the canoe slid away in the moonlight.

"White men stick together!" murmured Waggard.

The three watchers saw Morflet sit up in the canoe, but, watching until the man was utterly blotted out by the tropic night, they did not see him go overboard.

XII

WAGGARD and Lemuel drew Adam Scott away from his looking.

"The beggars are closing up," said the younger man. "We'd better jolly along."

Unexpectedly one of the closing-in circle of natives cried out as if discovering the three. This quick yelp was followed by a great chattering.

No word was required for concerted action. The three white men rushed into the brush, into the shrubbery of the yard. In a moment they were separated, lost from one another.

Adam Scott, hiding for a moment in the window recess of the big house, tried to tell by the sounds whether either of his companions was captured. It seemed they were safe, for the natives were still calling out directions, slashing at bushes, bickering and warning.

Scott followed the line of houses and shrubbery, barely missing detection two or three times when servants were sliding about, and finally came to the Street of Many Shades of Hair.

A squad of soldiers was coming along it from the direction of the fort. He knew this by the sound of evenly beating feet on the gravel roadway. Roily Greene would be in charge. If they saw him there would be questioning. Scott had no wish to lie, but if he told the truth he would be involved—Waggard and Lemuel would be seriously involved.

The soldier decided quickly. For the sake of his friends he would evade. He would protect them absolutely.

If he could make the soldiers believe that he was drunk! He remembered the snickering soldiers when they saw him in the *carromata*. A plan formed quickly.

His leggings and breeches were water-soaked to his knees. Greene and the others might be curious about that.

A short distance ahead a puddle of water stood beside the gravel vehicle track, where the high tide had seeped in. He waded in and stood there stupidly waiting.

Though Adam Scott drank when he felt like it and could get something to drink he was a light drinker and despised drunkenness. He had been drunk but four times in all his life. Those times were notable.

The first time was when a son had been born to him—a son now in West Point. The second time was when, as a corporal, he was "busted" by an irascible captain. The third, the day the United States entered the World War; and the fourth, three days after the Great Armistice.

Adam Scott despised himself for the times of his intoxication. The occasions shamed him. Afterwards he avoided his friends for days.

He was "hifalutin military" when drunk, demanding the most absurd thing that an enlisted man could demand—that he be saluted by other enlisted men as if he were an officer.

The marching squad saw Scott in the pool of water, up to his knees. Greene halted the men abruptly.

"What's wrong?" he demanded. "What's up?"

Scott assumed the characteristics that he knew to be his when "under the influence." He reared back and stuck out his chest. He puffed out his red cheeks and blew as importantly as a stallion. His stocky figure became ridiculous, a thing to laugh at.

"Great Cats!" exclaimed Roily. "Drunk again!"

"Salute meeee!" bellowed Scott at the top of his great voice. "Don't you know who I am?"

"Who the —— are you?" retorted the sergeant of the guard.

"Salute me!" Scott roared again. "I'l zhow you who I am!"

Greene gave the command of "Forward, double-time, march!" to his men and they rushed away, while Adam Scott stood there blowing out his breath drunkenly, ashamed of himself beyond expression, so real was his acting; knowing he could never explain this, and hoping with all the heart of a man who is a doting father that his boy—his stalwart in West Point—would never hear of these stories of his father's absurd drunks that were classics in the Army. But he did not regret the service to his friends.

XIII

THE great white transport was putting out of Honolulu harbor. It was out near Diamond Head, but a few of the homeward bound United States Infantrymen were still at the rails, looking, talking.

The men gradually became interested in the approach of a small craft on ahead—a small inter-island freighter she seemed. Passengers on ships are always interested in other craft.

Suddenly, when the vessels were no more than two hundred yards apart, the little fellow swung to starboard as if to cut across the path of the big Army vessel. But instead of actually cutting across she swung again and came on almost straight for the transport.

"What's she doing?" some one asked in startled awe. "She'll be plowed under."

It seemed, though, that the man at the wheel of the boat piled so high with boxes and crates, had no intention of being "plowed under." He kept straight ahead, in such a manner that he would miss the towering sides of the white ship while still going well under the rail.

When the small boat came abreast of the transport the pilot was seen to surrender the wheel to a Kanaka, then cup his hands and shout up to the line of soldiers hanging over the rail.

"What outfit? What regiment?"

"The *only* regiment! The fightingest regiment! Who wants to know?" yelled the khaki-clothed men. "*En route* from the Philippines!"

At that the man threw up his hands and shouted again:

"Thanks, men! Thanks!"

The soldiers hesitated at this, puzzled. Then one lone voice sent back sarcastically—

"Oh, you're quite welcome, I assure you!"

The man on the deck of the little freighter gave a gesture of helplessness.

"I don't mean that!" he shouted.

He stood there, looking up. The soldiers looked at one another, questioning.

"What does the fool mean?"

There was one at the rail who understood—Adam Scott. For he perceived that the fellow was Morflet.

"Hi!" yelled Scott. "I get ye! An outrigger canoe at night!"

The man's countenance lighted up at this curious key sentence, and he held up his half-bare arms. They were thick and brown. He paused uncertainly, looking about, as if trying to think what monkeyshine to cut next.

His thought lighted upon it. He bent and took up a crate—a great thing seemingly the burden of two men. He raised it above his head as Rolando had that day two years before raised the little cannon, and flung it down on the deck until the impact was audible on the high deck of the transport.

The little island boat shoved its prow into the waves made by the transport's passing. As it danced and slid there, Morflet stuck out his breast and hammered himself upon his full chest with his fists like a strong man of the caves in ancient days.

"Thanks!" he bawled again. "Thanks!"

Adam Scott impetuously waved his hat, while in his thought he was framing a letter to Waggard and Lemuel to tell them what had become of Morflet the white man—and some man!

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

IN WHAT he says to us concerning his serial beginning in this issue I think Arthur D. Howden Smith anticipates criticism where there will be little or none. If any one has the impulse to cavil over his writing the earlier history of some of the characters used by Robert Louis Stevenson, that impulse will die away on learning that Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, who is Stevenson's generally accepted literary heir and representative, saw no least reason why Mr. Smith should hesitate over writing the story and wished him god-speed with the undertaking.

What Mr. Smith has done lies frankly on the table. It was not undertaken until he had secured approval from the person best able and most fitted to speak for Stevenson's interest. The undertaking is a fully warranted one. The manner of its accomplishment is a matter for you to judge. *Adventure* presents the story with no misgivings.

Some people are going to say I ought to defend myself for writing "Porto Bello Gold," but I don't intend to—for one reason, because I enjoyed writing it more than any other yarn I have done. I had a bully time all through it, notwithstanding that it was an unusually difficult story to handle. It grew in my mind during a considerable period of time, and there are several more or less interesting factors in connection with its plotting which I will set down in their proper places. The principal point of interest, however, aside from any intrinsic interest in the story itself, must hinge upon the connection with Stevenson and "Treasure Island," and I can hear the people I referred to denouncing me as impertinent, and perhaps as a plagiarizer, for assuming to identify myself with what has been called the greatest story of maritime adventure in our language—with which last sentiment, by the way, I thoroughly concur.

I WILL take up the Stevenson connection first—to explain it, mind you, not to defend it. When I started to write the story I was reasonably sure that its plotting involved no legal violation of copyright, and I soon made certain of this. But I was not satisfied with this; I didn't want to place myself in the position of having some one write and say: "Oh, yes, Smith has kept within the law. You can't touch him. But what a yellow, cheap-john trick it was for a chap like him to loot the brain-product of a great artist!" In other words, I was interested in establishing the ethical justice of my position. So I went to the one person alive today who has a right to speak for Robert Louis Stevenson, his step-son, Lloyd Osbourne, for whom "Treasure Island" was written and to whom it was dedicated. Mr. Osbourne is the sole surviving representative of the Stevenson estate; the copyrights, I understand, vest in him. But more important than that, he represents our most valid connection with the Stevenson legend.

I put the question frankly to Mr. Osbourne: "Would you have any objection, ethical or legal—I don't think your legal objection could hold, but that's neither here nor there, because your ethical objection would be sufficient—to my writing a story which will tell how the treasure got on Treasure Island? Understand, Mr. Osbourne, an objection from you on either ground will be sufficient. I don't choose to place myself in the position of doing anything which you, as representative of 'R. L. S.', might feel called upon to denounce as an insult to his memory."

Mr. Osbourne answered me equally frankly: "I haven't the slightest objection. I think it's a wonderfully whimsical idea, and I hope you do a fine story. After all, you know, you can't hurt 'Treasure Island' by writing a bad story, but on the other hand, if you write a good story, you'll be helping 'Treasure Island' as well as yourself. Good luck to you."

And that's that. I ought to add that our conversation was oral, and the record I have made of it is according to my recollection. It is substantially accurate, I think.

OF COURSE, "Porto Bello Gold" is not, nor does it pretend to be, Stevenson's story in any particular. It is, structurally, entirely my own, with the possible exception that I have availed myself of certain situations, which Stevenson in "Treasure Island" refers to most sketchily, for salient episodes in my plot. This is especially true of the character and part in the plot of the boy *Darby McGraw*. Stevenson merely makes passing mention of him in the description by one of *Flint's* crew of *Flint's* death. I built up *Darby* practically from that one line. And in my story, you will note, he supplies the psychological interest which the boy *Jim* supplies in Stevenson's story—that is, the reactions of a boy to the glamour and realities of pirate life.

Flint, too, is as much mine as Stevenson's, for you will all remember that he does not actually appear in "Treasure Island," although he is described in some detail. I hope he passes muster. His death scene is built up from the same passing reference which I mentioned above. And it is a tribute to the essential greatness of Stevenson, an indication of his mastery which makes the work of the rest of us so feeble by comparison, that he was able to paint the picture of *Flint's* death to suit his especial plot needs in that one, raw, splashing phrase: "Fetch aft the rum, Darby McGraw!"

OF *LONG JOHN SILVER*, *Bill Bones* and several lesser characters I can say only that I have endeavored to represent them as it seemed to me they were depicted by their creator. If I have succeeded I have done well. In the case of *Pew* I have, I think, gone a trifle farther. Anyway, I tried to. And it is quite possible that in the bare trial I have overplayed my mark.

Murray is absolutely my own character, and some of you will remember him from "The Doom Trail." *Peter Corlaer* and the elder *Ormerod* figured not only in "The Doom Trail," but in "Beyond the Sunset." I elected to use these old friends because—well, because they are old friends, and because, as the story took shape in my mind, their figures began to loom clearer and clearer through the smoke-haze. I wanted to give the story an American connection, too.

The girl, *Moira O'Donnell*, and young *Ormerod* are all my own, as well as *Colonel O'Donnell*. And bless me, here I have gone and forgotten to mention *Ben Gunn*, the maroon! Strict Stevensonians can assail me with some validity for making him a congenital lack-wit, as "R. L. S." definitely says he was mentally crippled by his prolonged solitude. But I contend that he must have been defective from birth, and here, as in one or two other places, I have ventured to take advantage of the fact that I knew these characters some years before Mr. Stevenson had occasion to employ them!

Another point that any honest controversialist has a right to rage over is my arbitrary placing of Treasure Island, which you can see to best advantage in the map we have made from an old copy of "Dampier's Voyages." I haven't space to go into all my reasons for placing the island where I did, except that it more or less tallies as to latitude with the description Stevenson gives of the flora of his Treasure Island and would be ideally situated strategically for raiding purposes on the trade routes then followed.

UP ABOVE there a ways I said I'd fetch in several incidents that cropped up in the writing of the story. Well, the funniest thing about the whole yarn is that a friend of mine, who is not a writer, had had the idea of the story, and I heard of it from him by accident through a second friend. The fact that he had seen a good pirate story in "how the treasure got on Treasure Island"—that being the rough formula of the yarn—was largely instrumental in spurring me to tackle it. Also, he dreamed the scene of the branding of the girl with the knife—and I swiped his dream! That's the only scene in the book that I consciously swiped. Yes, brothers, I hear that lean, cadaverous person with the cantankerous profile in Second R, who flung the "Lie!" Naturally, there's no scene that can be written that hasn't been done before. The line of descent of the novel is from the group of unknown authors of "The Thousand and One Nights" to Boccaccio and other Italians to Chaucer to the Elizabethans to O. Henry and the rest of us. But we *can* try to add a few original trimmings to the ancient stylish stouts.

ANOTHER matter that interested me, and sheds a humorous sidelight upon the breadth of *Adventure's* reading-public, cropped up in connection with the dialect which *Peter Corlaer*, the Dutchman, uses. As I said before, *Peter* is an old friend of you old-timers. Now, when I came to write *Peter* the first time—that was in "The Doom Trail"—I decided to obey Rule One in handling dialect, which is to use darned little of it. Also, Rule Two, which is to make your dialect so that any reader can understand it. So I cast away a recently-acquired Dutch vocabulary, and restricted *Peter*, generally speaking, to two Dutch words, yes and no, *ja* and *neen*. Only—I didn't let him say *Neen*, because, said I to myself, very few people know that *no* is *neen* in Dutch, but everybody knows that *nein* is *no* in German—although, I should add, the words *neen* and *nein* are not so much alike as they look to be, because in the Dutch the final "n" is silent. So, to make a long story short, I made Peter say *nein*, instead of *neen*. A little thing, you'll say, some of you, and trivial. And all went well until after both "The Doom Trail" and "Beyond the Sunset" were published, when one day I received an indignant letter from an Episcopalian clergyman in Boston, asking me if I didn't know, etc., etc.

I was floored. I also decided that the joke was on me and that I was through *neening*—I mean *neining*. In "Porto Bello Gold" you'll find Peter denying like an honest Dutchman. But remember to be sure to forget the final "n."

AND now I shall have to quit, although there is really a lot more I'd like to say. I hope a reasonable number of you are going to like my story. Despite the national interest in the realistic novel since the War an increasing number of people are showing appreciation of the tale of high adventure, told with a distinctly romantic flavor. 'R. L. S.' did it to perfection; none better. I'd like to hope I may succeed in sending back to him a few chaps who missed him or have forgotten him. In fact, I feel so strongly about this that I sha'n't mind the inevitable accusation of "playing the sedulous ape."—ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH.

A WORD from Barry Scobee concerning his story in this issue:

Bellingham, Washington.

Travelers who have been in Ilo-Ilo, Philippines, should not jump to the conclusion that my story attempts to depict the military reservation at Ilo-Ilo and the east side of the city. My Oli-Oli is a fiction city, though the actual Ilo-Ilo did suggest it to me somewhat. I soldiered there in 1910 with the Ninth Infantry, company H, and my "top" was Bob Marsh, aged 30, who had been in three campaigns, in Cuba, in the Philippines, and with the Ninth in the Boxer trouble in China. Fairly good war experience for a young man.—BARRY SCOBEE.

HIS story in this issue, writes Frederick J. Jackson, was read by a couple of Western neighbors and this is what he says about one of them:

Montara, California.

The other is ——, who rides at rodeos when he has nothing else to do. At present he is nursing a broken leg, thanks to too much trust in a certain mule. —— is one of the best off-hand liars in the world. He feels complimented when I mention that fact to him. He claims to have been working for *Pete Newton* at the time of the raid mentioned in this story and to have been besieged in the bunk-house with *Inky*. To prove it he drew the enclosed sketch of the *Newton* ranch and the sketches of *Peaceful Pete* and *Cassidy* as he remembers them.—FREDERICK J. JACKSON.

CONCERNING his story in this issue a few words from Conroy Kroder:

Sebastopol, California.

If it is not an interesting yarn, the fault is at least not in the setting. Ever since locating here (but not entirely embedding myself) ten years ago, I've been delving into early California history, and I'm convinced that the particular section around the fifties is absolutely unequalled as to human interest among all mass movements of humanity. But of course the superlative is dangerous and not to be insisted upon.

HOWEVER, feeling so, I naturally haven't strayed far from fact in writing this bit of fiction. (Which statement I hope is not paradoxical: facts are an essence, fiction is an arrangement.) The Hounds existed, just as I've described; they were partially destroyed and driven underground in '49, and entirely destroyed in '51. One of their planned exploits was robbing the Custom House in exactly the manner I've described.

Among their accomplished exploits were repeated lootings of San Francisco under cover of incendiary fires—four times this happened. In May, '51, the business section was completely destroyed, and about $200,000 in loot carried off in a stolen bark, as *Duart* plans in this story. (See Bancroft, Vol. 23, page 205, also Larkin's Doc., Vol. 7, page 287.) The warning which Svenson received is a fac-simile of the one the Vigilantes issued—and since they were human, it is also true that they sometimes were misled.—CONROY KRODER.

AT A recent Camp-Fire I spoke strongly against a bonus, particularly for drafted men. My statement needs revision for several reasons.

First, the figure I gave as the cost of the bonus alone had to do with ultimate cost on a Civil War basis but was not thus qualified in my statement. There is no excuse for that carelessness. I merely apologize humbly. On the other hand, there is the minor item that some of the States have voted bonuses in addition to the proposed national bonus.

Second, so brief a statement of views needs amplification to cover the exceptions to the rule. For example, my sweeping preference for volunteers over drafted men should be qualified by the acknowledgements that some men volunteered to get a better chance at the softer and safer berths and that many drafted men, because of personal obligations and for other causes were fully justified in waiting until their country's need pointed its finger directly at them. I still hold to the general point that the bonus is even less justified in the case of the drafted man than in that of the volunteer.

MANY letters have come in, some agreeing with me, some differing in part, a few almost altogether. I'm proud to say that no one of those that differed expressed his difference in any but a manly, courteous way and that what they advanced were reasoned arguments, not whines. Best of all, they argued the matter as a general question, not as an issue personal to themselves.

On the main issue I still stand to my guns. A citizen owes war-service to his country. He has been since his birth a debtor to his country for protection of a hundred kinds to his life, property and general welfare. When, at his country's need, he is asked to pay that debt there should be no question of his willingness to pay. Having paid, there should be no question of rewards for paying.

THE law of our country, as of all other countries, is that all able-bodied males between certain ages are subject to military duty. In many countries military service is compulsory even in peace times, but ours requires it only in national emergency. Every such male is subject to this obligation and always has been. Before he is old enough for such service and after he is too old, he is exempt. But all the time and at any time all able males owe this obligation while between the age-limits. When a national emergency comes, those within the limits at that time are called on. It is merely the operation of a general, standing law. It is not, as some apparently have come to think, the singling out of certain citizens for an unfair amount of service.

All capable of it are subject to that service; our country does not hold them to it except as and *when* it is compelled to. Those who, at the time of an emergency, *happen* to be within the age-limits are called on. There is no favoritism or injustice in that.

It may not be pleasant or profitable to be called on. But war can not be turned into a pleasure party. War means national defense by whatever citizens happen at the time to be best fitted to do the defending. Answering that call is merely that almost forgotten thing—an obligation. One under which we were all born or which we voluntarily assumed. Answering that call is also a necessity. Who else is there to answer it? The women, children, old men and the infirm?

Yet the cry from most of the veterans of the last war is that they were made the "goats." True, they are in large part thinking of the case of the veteran *vs.* the stay-at-home, not, alas, of the veteran *vs.* his country, but they cry "goat." Why are they any more "goats" than the veterans of our former wars? I don't remember any outcries or demands for cash from those other veterans for serving their country while others stayed at home. These world-war veterans who are so eager for "justice and fair play"—they don't seem sufficiently eager for them to ask for them in the shape of dollars and cents for those other veterans as well as themselves.

BUT long before your letters began coming in I saw that I had covered only half the case and that in fairness the other half of it should be covered. The man who went into active service was merely paying a debt, not doing anything entitling him to a reward. But how about the men who stayed home? Their obligation to country was equally binding. What did *they* give?

There can be no blanket answer to their case. Many tried hard to enlist and were denied. Many were too old, too young, or too much disabled. Many were more needed back of the firing-line than on it and gave their service where it was most needed. Many had nothing to give except desk-work, propaganda, money and the like. Women, of course, were not eligible. Upon all those who did the best they could no blame can fasten. But there were others—some who gave nothing or too little, some who merely fattened on the emergency.

Concerning these last I find it difficult to speak with anything approaching moderation. Compared to war profiteers Benedict Arnold is a clean and noble subject and I know of no stronger incentive for keeping out of —— than the sure knowledge that these rats will be there to the last stinking unit and will have to be acknowledged as fellow-countrymen. And until they die and go to —— I hope no single day will pass that there is not burned into the brain of each one of them the nagging thought that he betrayed his fellows, his country and such manhood as he may have had and that therefore, whether his shame be known or hidden, he is a pariah and an outcast among us.

THOSE who served met their duty—gave. These others gave little or nothing but took much—even preyed upon those who served. Fattened their pocketbooks while decent citizens offered their lives for the common good. When our soldiers and sailors came home—those who survived not only the enemy but their own countrymen's profiteering and dishonesty on provision for Americans on the field—they found these others fat and sleek and in possession of all that was best and easiest, with little for the veterans except to write down the lost years, lost opportunities and lost health to profit and loss and begin over again in the rear of the procession. Naturally they resented this and still resent it. Who can blame them? They had to serve with their years, their wounds, their lives, while those others, if they served at all, served safe and generally at good profit, too often a profit that was their making financially.

One of them puts it as follows:

> You certainly touched a sore spot when you wrote that anti-bonus editorial. I see your point of view perfectly and the —— of it is that you are absolutely right. But no one else was a patriot for nothing and why should we be?
>
> I HAVE never favored the bonus. I have not made a single effort to get it. I never will. *But* if it is offered me, I will take it. Also I volunteered at the first and spent twenty-five months in the service. Please keep that paragraph in mind while reading the rest of this letter.
>
> It is right and proper that an able-bodied man should consider military service as a duty to his country to be performed without any compensation, but it is no more his duty to fight his country's battles at cost than it is for the manufacturer to manufacture war-supplies at cost. Did any of them do it? Not so you could notice it. They made sure of getting theirs while the getting was good.
>
> While we were dodging shells at a dollar and some cents a day every working man from shipbuilder to sheep-herder was getting from three to ten times as much as we were for their regular employment. Can you think of any reason why they couldn't show a little patriotism? Were we duly elected to show it all?
>
> When we got home they had the automobiles and

the girls and the jobs and they covertly ridiculed us for being such —— fools. They felt sorry for us and all that. They certainly could afford it.

I HATE the whole idea, but the U. S. shows degeneracy so plainly in its war record of inefficiency and graft that I think in all justice we have a slice of the graft coming to us. Graft it is, and nothing else. We need it worse than any one, so we ought to have some of the pie that nearly all the stay-at-homes had a generous helping of. But, my friend, I hate it all. Too plainly it tells the story of degenerating ideals and a cash patriotism.

It fairly makes me sick to think of the paltry arguments used to save money at the expense of our national safety. The milk and water, jelly-fishy, spineless saps who fail to see the eternal necessity of vigilance will make me crazy some day and so will the patriot who first asks for "Ten per cent plus."

We were boys when we went to that war and the flame of our idealism, our patriotism, our unselfish devotion to national ideals was a beacon that should have guided the money-grabbing manufacturerrs and union workers. But they closed their eyes and grabbed and grafted and we came home to find our little savings in their hands, our jobs gone and our sweethearts were their wives. Not only had we offered all on the battlefield, but we had lost all on the home sector.

We were disillusioned with a vengeance. Our little flame of devotion died and we became sullen, cynical, wearied and utterly disgusted and finally decided to ask for the bonus and show the world that we could fight and win on their chosen field of politics and graft.

AFTER I arrived in my home town I heard a large employer of men, say, "I'll hire any one but an ex-soldier and they aren't worth a ——." If I could have got my hands on him he would have been a casualty pronto. He was not willing to stand his share of the re-adjustment. He was too small to see that after two years of dependence on officers, two years of nerve-shock, excitement and danger, that it would take men a few months or a year to get back into the old rut of civilian life, and if he could see it, he was determined that he would not bear the cost. He was not an exception. He was the general rule. Every one talked about the worthlessness of the returned soldiers. No one saw the truth.

THE bonus is the soldier's reply to the heartless graft that marred our part of the war. It is a stern finger pointing to national weakness and degeneration that, if not heeded, will also point to the decline and fall of the Great Republic. Straws show which way the wind blows.

Intolerant laws, increasing disrespect for any law, inability of the officers to enforce law, mounting ratios of serious crime, uncurbed graft and the bonus all point to another nation that is traveling down the same road that Babylon, Assyria, Greece and Rome traveled in bygone ages.—A. B. C.

They say, "Yes, but look at the hard times they have had since. See how the farmer has gone broke and how they have lost their war-time profits in the after period of deflation." Fine, but how about us soldiers who never had a period of prosperity. *We Have Shared the Deflation.* I had a ranch before the war. Now I have a back-breaking load of debts. And my case is not an isolated one either.

Do you think the doctor and lawyer who lost their practice and the farmer who lost his farm by going to war got the same deal as the unprosecuted war profiteer?

The penitentiaries of the various States are filled with soldiers who are there because the terrific strain of the battle front unbalanced their minds. As a reward for their patriotism, they rot in jail An ex-soldier is hanged in Missouri for murder and the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* headlines it, "War Hero Dies on Gallows." We liked to read it, the rest of us, knowing, as we did, that the hell his country sent him to was undoubtedly the thing that made him a murderer.

They built one hospital for shell-shocked soldiers by an artillery range. Can you imagine such utter idiocy? Graft was the answer!

AGAIN I assure you I am not asking for the bonus. They can take their money and sink it in —— before I'll ask them for a single cent, *but*—no one in America fought for cost except the soldiers and I see no reason why we should.

There are temples in every land, raised in the honor of a thousand deities, but one god is supreme in all lands and that god is mammon. And his creed is, "Get it while the getting is good." The American Legion would have never asked for a bonus if the rest of the country had not shown them too plainly for them to doubt that they meant to make the war pay.

I saw sixty-odd dead American soldiers in Remonville, France, five years ago and I read a few weeks later that the war had made 16,000 new millionaires in America. I nearly sent Lenine a box of cigars.

All we want is part of our share out of the grab bag. No one else was a patriot for nothing. Why should we be? *We Were the Goats.* That's all.

He admits that the bonus is wrong, does not like it and sees in it a serious menace to the country, yet the injustice done the veteran to the profit of the stay-at-home is greater than he can bear. I think he voices the feelings of the vast majority of the decent, thinking veterans who favor or will accept the bonus. By the unrelenting moral code they are wrong. A man owes his country service whether the next man pays it or not. *It is not a question of him and the other fellow, but of him and his country.* He owes a debt; another man's failure to pay debts does not cancel that debt—still less turn his creditor into a debtor.

I STICK to my guns. The bonus is wrong, a disgrace to those who ask it and to those who pay it. But I can not blame any veteran for his bitterness. That is, for his bitterness against the profiteers, both labor and capital, and the stay-at-homes in general who lived soft and fat during the war and failed to give, according to their ability, as fully as the veteran gave. Also for their bitterness against the politicians and "statesmen" who see no question at all except one of politics. Also for their bitterness against the capitalists; these gentry urged the bonus at election-time as a good vote-getting plank, then opposed its going into effect because of its expense.

But for the bitterness that many feel for their country itself I do blame them. It is as much their country as it is the next man's. They as much as the rest of us have let it sink deeper and deeper into corruption and minority control until such things as the unsavory factors in the bonus question are possible. The graft, injustice, ingratitude and lack of patriotism they now complain of they themselves, as much as any one else, helped create by their indifference to the humdrum, every-day duties of citizenship. *No nation ever lived that did not sooner or later pay in full for bad citizenship.* In this case it happened that the bill was presented at a time and in a manner that made them the chief goats for the time being. Being the goats, they wail bitterly, as would the rest of us bad citizens if we happened to be the goats. It is human to do that. But it would be bigger and manlier if they took it standing up and said, "Here, we've learned bitterly the cost of corruption and indifference in public affairs. No country can go on paying that cost and live. We do not want our country to die. The only way to save her is to grub out the corruption and indifference. Let's go!"

SO MUCH for the veterans. But there remains an injustice to be wiped out.

War means service to the country, each according to his ability. The veterans have given their service. How about the vulture profiteers and the rest of the stay-at-homes? Their debt to the country was equally binding. They have paid little or nothing; some of them have fattened instead. *It's their turn to pay.*

Doubtless by the time this reaches you Washington will have settled the bonus matter one way or another. Or think they've settled it—no matter which way the wind of expediency blows their decision, the ill effects of this unsavory bonus mess will bear down upon us and our children for generations to come. But we can be quite sure in advance that they will not wipe out the fundamental injustice. A bonus of a few dollars or a few thousand dollars per man can not do it.

NOT only America's honor but America's safety demand that it be wiped out. There is only one way. Make those others pay as fully in proportion as the veterans have paid. To determine the remaining indebtedness of each would be a many-sided, intricate, delicate problem. But it could be worked out. Confiscatory taxation is barred, but it could be made no more confiscatory in principle than the surtaxes of the present income tax. In proposing it I show myself as poor makings for a politician, for the statesman who advocated it would commit political suicide. The capitalists will tell you it would spell economic ruin, but I can not be convinced that common human justice ever spells economic or any other kind of ruin in the long run. Unless it be the ruin of such things and people as need ruining for the good of the community.

The foundation of this remedy may be stated thus: Levy a practically confiscatory tax upon the increase in all incomes that increased between the beginning and the end of our part in the war, and upon the interest on such increases, real veterans being exempt.

Very simple and very just. No other measure can really settle the matter. Therefore it isn't likely to be adopted.

BUT just the same we ought to fight for it. The mere public advocacy of such a measure would at least show that a sense of justice and an understanding of a citizen's obligations are still alive in America—would go far toward removing the present natural bitterness.

Yes, it would hurt the rest of us, some of us pretty severely. But the war hurt the veterans, some of them pretty severely. Did they owe the country any more than we? And it would still leave us paying less than they paid. It is really a very mild and only a partial adjustment, hitting the profiteer (whether he be manufacturer, capitalist, contractor, ship-yard worker, miner, politician, laborer or any other kind of citizen), but still leaving the rest of us stay-at-homes smaller givers, for the most part, than the veterans. The remedy should be enlarged to reach us all—a graduated tax on *all* incomes (real veterans exempt) in addition to the regular income tax and the above tax on war-time increases, so that each of us would give enough to hurt.

THERE is another and a mighty reason for advocating this. Even if such an adjustment couldn't be made to cover the injustices of the last war, it should be put before the people of this country as a plan to be followed in any other war that comes to us. And that plan, comrades, is one that would do more than almost any other to *put an end to war*. Think it over.

What would be done with the money? Give it to the Government for expenses, thereby relieving all of us of current governmental expenses to that extent, or devote it to public developments, or give it to the needy of Europe. And then make your citizenship in this republic so active, so honest and so relentless that the politicians and grafters don't get it instead.

BUT the bonus—that will probably be decided before you read this. (I've suggested the above plan to the American Legion, but doubt its being ever advanced). If it is passed, you veterans can either accept or refuse the dollars handed you. In the abstract, refusing is the better part. But there is another side to that. First, some of you need it acutely and, if you are a real veteran, asking you to refuse is too much. Second, if a veteran refuses, the money will probably go back into the hands of the politicians. Better take it than let it do that—that is, take it on this basis: "I do not take this money as pay for serving my country, but as money taken mostly from those who served none or little, so that they might be giving a bit more like their share to our country. It really belongs to our country, not to me. I'll turn it over to whatever public cause seems to serve most Americans best."

And, if the real lesson of this bonus matter has sunk into you, I think you will devote your money to helping cure the bad citizenship that brought our country to this pass. Also, that you'll realize the mere paying of some dollars is not all that the cause of better citizenship needs from you. You are still in debt to your country, to the people. That is what a democracy means—a mutual, life-long debt between each citizen and the people as a whole. The people can not pay their side of it rightly unless you pay your side of it rightly.—A. S. H.

ONE of you takes issue with E. A. Brininstool's little article on "The Death of Sitting Bull." In our cache are a number of letters pro and con on the question of white treatment of red men.

Mobridge, South Dakota

Get it straight from some pioneer in South Dakota.

I heard this very piece from a man who was in Colonel Drum's command and on the march when this cowardly act of the so-called white man was going on. Why was Buffalo Bill lost in the hills on that day? And why did Bull Head, Drum, McLaughlin stand these defenseless old men, women and children up like fence-posts to be shot down? Don't paint the white men with fleece-lined wings when they were such cowards.

This Indian business is still so rotten it should be buried, and possibly will be when the white man can not derive enormous amounts of money from them. If you want to do some good, start something like establishing a system or something to that effect. For instance, they ship hay in from Kansas and the Indian has to pay $20 to $25 a ton for it when it can be bought for $6 to $7 right in the neighborhood. I am of old Yankee stock and sure hate to see this continual swindle and apparent ridicule.—T. JOSLYN.

THOSE of you who save your back files of our magazine can get, so long as the limited supply holds out, printed indexes of all volumes back to and including Volume XXV. Also those of Vols. V to XVIII inclusive. Also Vol. II. (We *may* be able later to supply those for Vols. XIX to XXIV inclusive.) No charge for them, but we'll be glad if you enclose a two-cent stamp to cover postage.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs that Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAN BROWN, 1624 Biegelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 3633 New Hampshire Ave., N. W., Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage two cents.*)

7. South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).
CHARLES BROWN, JR., P. O. Box 308, San Francisco, Calif. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

8. ★ Australia and Tasmania
FRANK MORTON, care *Triad* magazine, 19 Castlereagh St., Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage ten cents.*)

9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

10. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (*Postage ten cents.*)

11. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4., Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

12. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 714 Marquette Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with ten cents in stamps NOT attached*)

13. Japan

Grace P. T. Knudson, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

14. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo

Captain Beverley Giddings, Morgan City, La. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

15. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan

Gordon MacCreagh, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters

Capt. C. L. Oliver, P. O. Box 2882, Tampa, Fla. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

17. Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan

George W. Twomey, M. D., 41 Rue de France, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting.

18. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria

Robert Simpson, care *Adventure*. Labor, trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

19. ✠ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo

Charles Beadle, care of Ramsey Direct Service, 44 Rue d' Hauteville, Paris, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Postage 12 cents.*)

20. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand

Captain F. J. Franklin, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

21. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East

R. G. Waring, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

22. Africa Part 5 Morocco

George E. Holt, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

23. Africa Part 6 Tripoli

Captain Beverley Giddings, Morgan City, La. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

24. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

25. Africa Part 8 Sudan

W. T. Moffat, Sudan Customs, Khartoum, Sudan, Egypt. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

26. Turkey and Asia Minor

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, geography, races, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

27. Bulgaria, Roumania

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

28. Albania

Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

29. Jugo-Slavia and Greece

Lieut. William Jenna, Plattsburg Barracks, N. Y. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

30. Scandinavia

Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland

Fred F. Fleischer, 464 Park Ave., West New York, N. J. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

32. Great Britian

Thomas Bowen Partington, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information.

33. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile

Edgar Young, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topograply, minerals, game, languages, customs.

34. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil

William R. Barbour, Room 423 Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

35. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay

William R. Barbour, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information.

36. Central America

Charles Bell Emerson, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

37. Mexico Part 1 Northern

J. W. Whiteaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

38. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California

C. R. Mahaffey, care of Roadmaster, S. P. Co., San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

39. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land and Northern Quebec

S. E. Sangster ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Also Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

40. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario

Harry M. Moore, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

41. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario

George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe. St., Woodstock, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

42. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District

T. F. Phillips, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

43. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta

Ed. L. Carson, Monroe, Wash. Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

44. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin

Reece H. Hague, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

45. ✠ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec

Jas. F. B. Belford, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

46. Alaska

Theodore S. Solomons, Larkspur,, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

47. Baffinland and Greenland

Victor Shaw, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

48. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.

E. E. Harriman, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

49. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico

H. F. Robinson, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, 'including the snake dance; oil-fields; hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

50. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.

Frank Middleton, 509 Frémont St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

51. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains

Chester C. Davis, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with three cents in stamps—in Mr. Beadle's case twelve cents—NOT attached*)

52. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
(Editor to be appointed.) Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, outdoor photography, history and inhabitants.

53. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. Whitaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

54. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
Joseph Mills Hanson (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure.* Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

55. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.* Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

56. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.* Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

57. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
Geo. A. Zerr, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See next section.*)

58. Eastern U. S Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks
Raymond S. Spears, Inglewood, Calif. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

59. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
Howard A. Shannon, care of *Adventure.* Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

60. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
Howard A. Shannon, care of *Adventure.* Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

61. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
William R. Barbour, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

62. Eastern U S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
Hapsburg Liebe, Box 432, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

63. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine
Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

A.—Radio

Donald McNicol, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

Victor Shaw, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. Gordon, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—**All Shotguns,** including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.*

2.—**All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers,** including foreign and American makes. Donegan Wiggins, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—**Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800.** Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. Lewis Appleton Barker, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.* Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Tropical Forestry

William R. Barbour, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

G.—Aviation

Lieut.-Col. W. G. Schauffler, Jr., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical, laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

H.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

Fred. F. Fleischer, 464 Park Ave., West New York, N. J. *United States:* Military history, military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general, "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command.

I.—American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

Arthur Woodward, 217 W. 125th St., New York. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

J.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write J. Cox, care *Adventure*

For general information on **U. S.** and its **possessions,** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries,** the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti,** the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska,** the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii,** Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba,** Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.,** Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **Canal Zone,** the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. Morrall, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

Personal

READERS have been asking for the autobiographies of "Ask Adventure" editors; and those staff members who believe that a few words about themselves will promote better acquaintanceship all around, are responding to the request. The order in which these autobiographies are printed doesn't signify anything. They are withdrawn from the file at random:

Washington, D. C.

I have always liked the great big outdoors, and people. I have always liked to travel. I have spent vacations with my parents all over the east coast from Maine to Virginia and from Quebec to Vancouver and Alaska.

I was born in Washington. I attended the public schools here, and prepared for the Consular Service at George Washington University. I got the Consular Service "bug" while in prep school, from an over portion of *Wanderlust*. I got side-tracked from the Consular Service from May, 1914 until December, 1914, as I went to Alaska to work on the surveying of the Government railroad at the suggestion of a cousin of mine who was doing the work.

However, in July, 1915, I finally went into the Consular Service and was sent to Carlsbad, Austria, where I stayed until we were thrown out upon the breaking of diplomatic relations. I was then detailed in Göteborg, Sweden, until August, 1919, when I came home, intending to resign, but had another attack of *Wanderlust* and went out to Albania on intelligence work for the department to be used by our peace mission in Paris. In April owing to internal uprisings in the country I was ordered to Saloniki, Greece, to await further orders. There I stayed until July, when I was ordered to take temporary charge of the office at Aden, Arabia. I nearly died of fever in Aden and after two months went to Johannesburg, Transvaal, to get over it. My stay there was only six weeks, when I was sent to take charge of the office at Lourenço Marques, Portuguese East Africa, and after staying there four months I resigned to come home.

During my time spent in the service I have done about everything there is to do in it. In Austria we looked after all the Allied civil prisoners, from the Russian aristocracy to the dirtiest, smallest Polish refugees. In Göteborg I handled passport control, shipping control and worked for the military and naval attachés on their intelligence work. In Albania I was sent to do political intelligence while that territory was up for consideration at the Peace Conference. The rest of my posts were purely routine ones, and incidentally very tiresome.

The whole time in the service I have always endeavored to get about as much in the country as possible. One week-end I would spend with some princeling at an old castle; the next I would be up in the mountains with a pack on my back, having a *real* time with the lusty peasants; and then again I would spend a few days with some manufacturer and learn all possible how porcelain was made, or ball bearings, whichever the case might be.

I have always tried to get right into the atmosphere of the place I was in, and "be one of them."

I managed to learn German, Swedish and the other two Scandinavian languages quite well; but somehow the Latin tongues always balked me, just the same as their ideals of life in general. They begin one way in life and we another. I don't really think we ever get together.

Just now it is up to us all to learn all we can about the rest of the world. We are thoroughly mixed up in Europe just now, and we must watch our step.—ROBERT SWAN TOWNSEND.

San Francisco, Calif.

I first saw the light of day in Sumner County, Kan.; but shortly afterward my father took up a quarter-section in the Cherokee Strip, and I resided in Oklahoma until at the tender age of ten. Afterward I lived in California and Missouri and enlisted in the U. S. Navy in Kansas City in 1910, and in the Navy reached the dizzy height of Quartermaster 3rd Class, serving mostly in the Torpedo Flotilla on the Pacific Coast.

Being near the border, at San Diego, I became quite interested in Mexico, and after leaving the Navy I went into Lower California, staying there for over two years. My adventures were extremely varied, including placer mining, goat-herding, lobster-fishing, railroad work, steering four mules on the business end of a Fresno scraper, considerable activity along the border, and this, sad to say, at times not exactly as the U. S. customs and immigration officials would have it. I can say that they still remember me down there, although I have reformed and am now an upstanding member of the community. However, I was young and foolish those days.

At the time of going to Lower California I was able to say only three words in the language of Cervantes, and that was "*Poco tiembo llueve*" or "it will soon rain," and for that reason they called me PTL. I afterward acquired the name of the "Candy Kid" on account of my taste for sweet stuff, showing how young and foolish I really was.

After many varied adventures which would take too long to tell I became mixed up with a little MID (Military Intelligence Division) although entirely on my own hook—as we all were—and made some very, very nice maps for Uncle Sam of many places and parts of Lower California. Afterward I went to the central part of Mexico; but before I went I had the extreme pleasure of spending thirty-six days as a guest of Colonel Cantu in a 4 x 8 adobe *calabozo* in the middle of the Summer, in the Imperial Valley. They durn near got me that time!

I afterward continued with my work in the MID line; but one night I sat down in the Calexico movie right next to the seat of Señor Cantu. When the lights went on, there I was, and there *he* was. Strange to say, that entirely ruined any value I might have had down there, so I moved on. I had on an American cavalry uniform; and as he knew me I justly decided that Lower California was no place for me after that.

In the central part of Mexico I roamed around quite a bit, getting to see many parts of the country. Afterward I worked at Mapimi for the Penoles Mining Company as warehouse accountant, and stayed there about fifteen months. I afterward went to Monterey with the intention of getting a job in Tampico as Mr. Villa *et al.* were getting quite thick around there; and shortly after I left they kidnaped the superintendent, Mr. Krull, for $25,000 ransom; and what is more, they got it!

I left Monterey for Tampico and had the pleasure of having the train blown up. I can still remember how Mauser bullets sounded when they struck the wheels of the car truck I was under. I bet if I had a nail I could have made a dugout in a marble floor that time.

We had quite a time of it, but were finally rescued by an armored train that came from Victoria. We had a guard of about forty men, but they were more of a liability than an asset. They did beat the bandits off, but they had more luck than brains at that. I guess one side was afraid and the other side glad of it.

After leaving Mexico I worked for the Southern Pacific around Ogden in the commissary for a while, then went to sea as I had taken out a seaman's ticket before I went to central Mexico, making a number of trips to Mexico and Central America, and also one to Baltimore through the Panama Canal and back, and also made another trip to Port Arthur, Texas, last Winter, on one of Jawn D.'s tankers. At present I am working again for the Southern Pacific as a timekeeper, and those stirring days seem like a dream to me now.

Lately I spent some months in Sinaloa, being interested in a sort of fishing concern; but it blew up, as a great many other things do down there. However, I gained a whole lot of experience; and if it keeps on I will really know something about Mexico in 20 or 25 years more. It takes many long years for a man to get to really know a country; but from a general foundation a man can picture to himself how things are in country he has not seen. For a man to cover all Mexico he would have to travel years and then he wouldn't know half of it.

Summing it all up, I am a jack of all trades and master of none. Like many other fellows, I will try anything in reason once; and if it appeals to me I will try it again. Nowadays I know just enough about Mexico to realize just how little I do know, and I think that a good state of mind to be in.

Another time I and three more were guests of the Republic of Mexico for three days. They accused us of piracy, intimidation with a deadly weapon, attempted kidnaping, leaving port without permission and several more crimes against the peace and dignity of Mexico. It was all true but in a good cause, as we were firmly requested by the American consul to prevent the leaving of a gentleman badly wanted for forgery in California, and he got us out of jail. We delivered the goods; and what else could a man want? He didn't leave!

I never will forget being marched down the main street of Ensenada with a hollow square of the brave defenders of the sacred soil of Mexico with fixed bayonets around me as a guard of honor(?) They thought at first that they really had somebody; but it was all cut and dried, or we would probably be there yet.

Many other dark and bright chapters of my life could be stated, but it would take too long. However, I think I qualify as a half-way adventurer; and my adventures are not finished yet.—C. R. Mahaffey.

Tweed, Ont., Canada.

I haven't any letters after my name; the school I have attended all my life—that of minute observation and experience—does not issue any recognized degrees. Have several diplomas in literary studies, but of course they have nothing to do with it.

All right then. Now first I have spent thirty years, every spare minute I could get, fishing and hunting, and have carried a gun or rod or both in the bush and on and along the most important of the waters of Ontario. Have hunted and fished in British Columbia and Alaska and some parts of the U. S. A., too; but the most of my time has been spent in Ontario, and I am still at it when I can get the time. The last fish I caught was a twenty-one-pound maskinonge hooked in the lake here at Tweed last Fall just before it froze up; and the last thing I shot was a seven-hundred-pound moose at Foleyet, Ont., in 1919, with the single exception of some partridge shot here last Fall. And in that thirty years in all my travels I have kept my eyes open and studied as I saw.

I have been setting traps and talking with trappers, white and Indians, since I was eight years old, when my father took me with him to set his traps, and have taken furs when we got only fifteen cents for a muskrat hide. I could paddle a canoe when it was hard work for me to reach far enough over the side to paddle, and I learned to swim so young I don't remember learning.

Blazed out and worked a thirty-mile trap-line for two Winters when I was nineteen and twenty; and could do it yet, and with greater success, if my health were better. Can tell you at a glance what a pelt is worth and within three or four ounces of what a fish will weigh as it comes out of the water. Am willing at any time to back myself, and have never yet lost a bet on it, against all comers with a fishing-rod or still-hunting with a rifle, and have made as high as ninety-one out of a hundred with clay birds. Can tell any of the fur-bearers by their tracks in the snow and know the habits and habitats of all of them in Ontario, and will guarantee that I can walk into any bush in North America and come out where I went in.

To sum up, then, I can hold up my end with any woodsman I ever hit the trail with. And what I know I know, and I know I know it, because I have learned what I know by observation, hard work and practical experience. No, I don't know it all, and if I lived to be a million years old I wouldn't know it all then; but I have learned just about all one poor brain can gather and remember in thirty years. Is that good enough?—George L. Catton.

The full statement of the sections, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Chances for Russian Emigrants

MILLIONS of acres of land open to them in Canada—if the British standard looks better to them than the red banner of the Internationale:

Question:—"I have about a hundred and fifty Russian friends, now in Czecho-Slovakia, all with high agricultural education, including former agricultural professors, doctors and technical men.

What country offers best possibilities for establishing agricultural and stock-farm colony on land that would be granted by the mother country and would also render financial assistance if necessary?

Which of following do you think offers best opportunity: United States, Canada, South Africa, Argentina or Manchuria?"—HENRY FALTZ, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Moore:—If I were to tell you that Canada is the best country in the world somebody in the United States, South Africa, Argentina or Manchuria would write in to tell me that I was a cock-eyed liar. But I'm going to take a chance and say from what I know that I believe that Canada is the place for your compatriots, providing they behave themselves, obey the laws of the country and assume the *onus* and responsibility of British citizenship.

And I will tell you further that if your people are what you say of them, any country might be proud to have them and will not let a chance slip to have them come into the country.

I believe in our Western provinces there is a place for them, and the easiest way for you to find out is to write Colonization Department, Canadian Pacific Railways, Montreal, Que.; or write to the Minister of Immigration, House of Commons, Ottawa, Canada, and find out what they have to offer. State your case clearly. This country needs skilled men—we have millions of acres of good land that has never been touched.

Get after the C. P. R. or the Government and make them talk turkey. Tolstoi took his men into the West, and they made good. Brother Faltz might go and do likewise. And here's more power to your elbow; but may the good Lord have mercy on your soul if you start any Bolshevistic movement in this country.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Bismarck to New Orleans by House-Boat

TWO thousand, six hundred miles of glorious loafing:

Question:—"Would like some information concerning a trip down the Missouri to the Mississippi and then on to New Orleans and if possible around the Gulf coast to Florida.

Most of the boats that go through Bismarck coming down from up-river are house-boats, and of course a trip with such a boat would have to end at New Orleans.

Now we thought that perhaps you could give us a plan or tell us where we can obtain one so that we may construct some sort of a flat-bottomed boat this Winter to make the trip in next Summer, using the same boat for the river trip and the Gulf cruise. I presume it will be necessary to have some sort of a power-boat.

What sort of a boat do you suggest? And the probable cost? Could we do the work ourselves? Could the boat be bought cheaper than we could construct it?

How long would the river trip take? The Gulf trip if we ended the trip at Key West? What would be the probable expense of such a trip for two people?

Would it be safe to make the trip in a dory? What kind of a dory? What kind of power?

In a canoe? What kind of a canoe? What power?

Any information or suggestions you give us will be gratefully received."—T. M. MACLACHLAN, Bismarck, N. D.

Answer, by Mr. Zerr:—The trip from Bismarck to New Orleans is feasible, and there it must end. It is absolutely unsafe for an inexperienced person, not trained in ocean-going craft, to attempt the passage from New Orleans to, say, Key West. It must be remembered that only ocean-going craft can navigate the Gulf, which really is a part of the ocean. A house-boat, no matter how substantially constructed, is out of the question.

The main question is money, also comfort and equipment. It also depends who your companion is. If a woman, more money is needed as she may object to the coarse food men are accustomed to, and a certain comfort would naturally be due her.

Skiffs can be bought here for from $50 up; a house-boat would cost from $300 up. The question again is, you may buy lumber cheaper there than I can get it here. An ordinary flat here costs from $500 up. I think a house-boat 30 feet long and 10 feet wide would fill your bill.

Here are a few boat-builders from whom you may get prices on motor boats and ordinary skiffs, to which a detachable motor may be added to facilitate progress: Racine Boat Co., Racine, Wis.; Simonds Boat Co., Chicago, Ill.; Wise Boat Works, Wayzata, Minn.; Dingle Boat Works, St. Paul, Minn.

As to distance. From Bismarck to the mouth of the river confluence with the Mississippi, 1,458 miles; to the principal steamboat landing, St. Louis, 30 miles; to New Orleans, 1,140 miles; total, 2,628 miles. With an ordinary motor you could easily make about 125 miles per day, providing there is no trouble with snags or engine. Trip could be made in say about 21 days.

As to eatables, you could get provender along the route, which would be better than getting your own meals, which also takes time.

Personally I would prefer to buy the equipment; then you are certain of getting dependable craft, I am certain you can purchase cheaper near your home town than I can do here. You know, when you buy the lumber and material, build, etc., you have more trouble than the entire trip would be worth.

I may have been abrupt as to the Gulf trip, but I am held responsible for advice given. Hope you have a good time, as I often wanted to get down that way; but lack of time and money prevented me.

More about Diamonds in British Guiana

THIS question and answer supplements a paragraph written by Captain Dingle which appeared in the issue of Jan. 20, 1923:

Question:—"I read an article in the *Scientific American* that related to diamonds in British Guiana. William J. La Varre, who was collecting specimens of birds and animals for the Smithsonian Institution, was the author of the article mentioned. He states, 'British Guiana (up the Mazaruni River) has given the hope of wealth to those at least who will intelligently work for it.' La Varre's quotation. He claims to have brought back one cluster of gems of 500 carats, and a cluster of 150 carats, and a single stone of more than 30 carats.

Without asking you to go to any considerable trouble, can your department verify the present conditions as stated—and if wealth awaits those "who take the dare of mosquitoes, malaria and a generally trying climate"? La Varre quoted. I enclose a stamp for your kind reply."—WILSON WHITE, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—The chief production area of the diamond-fields of British Guiana lies some fifty miles inland from Georgetown as the crow flies; but by the river route, which is the only feasible way of entering, it is some two hundred and thirty-odd miles. This area is around Kurupung, at the head of the Mazaruni River. Georgetown has about sixty thousand population, and lies below sea-level, and the eleven-foot tides are kept out by dikes. There is no sand to make beaches here, and the river-borne alluvial mud colors the sea for miles like pea soup. The mud flats extend eight to ten miles seaward.

This is tropical country with mangrove jungles and sugar and rice plantations. The annual precipitation is around one hundred inches, and the daily temperature variation is from seventy-four to eighty-nine degrees F.

To get to the diamond-fields you board a light and jolty railway for a two-hour trip from Georgetown to a steamer landing at Perika.

From Perika a small Government steamer makes a trip every other day up the Essequibo River, thirty-five miles, to the little frontier town of Bartica, which is the true "jumping-off place" for the diamond-fields. There are very limited accommodations for a white man at Bartica.

From this point every one must provide his own transportation unless a member of some party. Boats of several tons capacity, with ten paddlers each and a bow and stern man added, have been standard; but last Spring launches which towed freight-boats up the rapids were used. It takes from twelve to twenty-six days to make the trip, although it is reported that the launches are making it in from eight to ten days' time. It is one hundred and seventy-five miles from Bartica to the mouth of the Kurupung River. The trip down has been made in five days.

The *Hinterland* where the diamonds are washed out with placer gold is hilly, much cut by cross creeks and covered with tropical forests; but it is quite extensive, running east and west along the banks of the Mazaruni on both sides for over a hundred miles. The most productive area worked in 1922 was Kurupung Creek, a tributary on the right, or south, bank of the Mazaruni.

You should have from $1,500 to $2,000 for this trip and reserve to take you back home, should you draw a blank. Freight rates from Bartica are $135 to $180 per ton. You can buy a small boat with an out-board motor of a size to carry your outfit and make it up from Bartica in five days or a week. Labor up there is provided by the blacks at a daily wage of from eighty cents to one dollar a day and grub. A large freight boat—maximum allowed by the River Navigation Laws—is 40 ft. x 7.5 ft. x 2 ft. 10 ins., carries four tons with twenty men and baggage; costs $65, and wages of steersman are $60 and of bowman $40 a month—these latter having to pass a rigid examination by the Government.

Mining laws are liberal: Five dollars pays for a license to prospect on all unoccupied Crown lands, and with this you can stake a claim of 500 acres, on which you pay an annual rental of fifty cents an acre, together with a fee of twenty-five dollars for an "alluvial certificate," which is assessed on each quarter-acre actually worked. Then there is a royalty tax of twenty cents a carat assessed on the excess over 250 carats taken from each quarter-acre—covered by your "alluvial certificate."

All diamonds brought to Georgetown must be entered at the office of the Commissioner of Lands and Mines. Diamonds can be exported only through local banks except in special cases where a permit is issued by the Colonial Governor.

The diamonds found are of good water and average around six to the carat, though stones of one and two carats are frequently found. The largest stone recorded weighed twenty-nine and five-sixteenths carats, is called "Kurupung" and was nearly overlooked, having passed over the screen. It was brought to Georgetown in December, 1921, by the two negroes who owned the claim and was bought by Wm. J. La Varre for $4,000. It was a twin crystal, having a groove in the center, and probably had to be sawed in two when cut. It had a slight greenish cast in the rough. Last year Wm. J. La Varre, who represented an American company, did extensive exploration work and much to improve river transportation.

The geology of the Mazaruni is described in "Geology of the Goldfields of British Guiana" by Sir John B. Harrison, published by Dulau & Co., London. Quoting this work:

"The rocks are dolerite conglomerate (including sandstone) and granitite. The superficial deposits in which the diamonds are found consist of detrital products of these rocks; the gravel being derived almost entirely from the conglomerates and consisting of quartz pebbles of all colors. The diamonds are accompanied by certain heavy minerals such as tourmaline, black sand and gold in greater or less amounts. The tourmalines are considered by diggers to be a sure indication of diamonds.

"These gravels are deposited along the courses of the streams; as the streams shifted and deepened, much of the gravel was left raised above the water level as terraces, forming what are called the 'deep deposits.' These terraces were cut by tributary streams as they developed and their contents of diamonds concentrated in the stream-beds by the removal of the light, valueless material and in this way the shallow deposits were formed. Few of the 'deeps' have been worked at all; the bulk of the production having come thus far from the shallow deposits. In this latter class the overburden runs from few inches to three or four feet.

"Pay gravel is six inches to one foot thick. One rich claim on Puzzle Creek, right bank of the Tacouba, averaged 100 carats to five cubic yards of gravel with some stones running up to ten carats, and the average local sale value was twenty dollars the carat. In the 'deeps' the gravel is 40 to 50 feet thick; values in gold and diamonds begin ten feet from the bottom and improve rapidly with depth. These 'deeps' can best be worked with a light, cheap plant of machinery, as it has been found impracticable to get more than 25 feet in depth by manual labor. The shallows are best worked now with black diggers using a sluice, or a long-tom."

Mosquitoes are bad as in all tropics; but malaria, typhoid and dysentery are the evils to watch out for. The main thing is to watch your drinking-water. *Boil it all!* If you are careful and moderate in your habits—providing you are sound to begin with—you can stay in this locality and keep your health all right.

Trapping-Regions of North America

EVEN in the pursuit of fur the automobile now plays a part:

Question:—"I wish to know the best places for trapping and hunting in the United States and Canada; also some of the trading-posts of the North and Northwest. I will appreciate your advice."—LOYD COLLUM, Prattville, Ala.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—The great trapping-regions of the United States are found in Louisiana, Arkansas, the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevadas. The northern States, Wisconsin and Minnesota, are big trapping-regions, and Washington, Oregon and Idaho have furs. Alaska is the greatest American trapping-region.

The wilderness of Canada from Quebec to British Columbia is probably the best trapping-region in the world except Russia and Siberia. My own choice would be upper Ontario, out from Port Arthur, but one must have had snowshoe and line and deep-snow and cold experience — the outfit costs about $1,500 to $2,500 for that country. Unless one merely has loops or spot outfit out from one cabin.

Taxes are heavy on trappers in Canada now.

The best trapping now is probably spot trapping from an automobile, starting in the Fall in the north and keeping ahead of the snow into the south or southwest. Good trappers used to the various conditions can make expenses and even a little extra at this. But it takes a lot of skill—knowledge of various conditions.

A big trip from Fort Benton, Mont., to New Orleans in a shanty-boat offers a lot of spot trapping, with Winter freeze-up somewhere on the Missouri in Montana or the Dakotas.

Texas Bad-Men

ALSO something about venting brands:

Question:—"I would like to get a little information regarding the King Fisher gang of outlaws and others who terrorized Texas years ago; especially their size and the date.

I have often observed the expression in Western stories, 'venting a brand.' What does this mean, and how is it accomplished?"—W. H. GRIFFITH, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Answer, by Mr. Whiteaker:—There is very little known about the early outlaws of Texas other than what is written in the "blood-and-thunder" stories that one finds on the shelves of second-hand books in some of the book-stores. Most of these stories are out of print now, and at that time these men were better known away from home than they were at home.

The outlaws that used to have Texas as their play-ground were active during the Civil War and into the 70's and 80's. There have been so many versions of their lives that it is a hard matter to know exactly what they really did. They received the name of outlaws in the majority of cases because of the thirst for revenge that arose over some injury received by them or some member of their family during or after the trials of the war. This was the case with Sam Bass, John Wesley Hardin, and I think of King Fisher, but am not certain as I have been unable to find any record about his early life.

There was a family of Fishers in Red River County, Texas, during the war. The father was captured by bushwackers and had his finger and toe nails pulled out and his tongue cut off. That would have been a good reason for sons to start on a hunt for revenge, and it may be the same Fisher.

Ben Thompsom was another bad-man with his guns. He was an officer, though, and did his killing, so he claimed, in line of duty. Many had it in for him, and so he finally got his in the back while taking a drink. The followers of these men were never of any large number—twelve to fifteen was a large gang—but the numbers changed from time to time; about six companions were an average-size gang.

Write to the H. P. N. Gammell Book Co., Austin, Tex., about books on the different outlaws of Texas. If it is in print he has it.

Venting a brand may mean one thing here and something else elsewhere as the definition seems to be elastic. Rustlers changed brands by wetting a sack and blotting out the brand on the animal by branding over it. The steam from the iron caused the hair and the former branding place to peel off, then a new brand was put on. Brands were also changed by using a running branding-iron without the wet sack.

"Queen City of the East"

SPLENDID Bombay:

Question:—"Would you be able to give me a description of Bombay, India, as to appearance, streets, customs of the people, weather conditions?

Would appreciate it greatly if you would give me the titles of any books about India, which would be instructing.

It is very important that I be somewhat posted on India within a month. hence these questions."—ROBERT D'LA RUE, Gilboa, N. Y.

Answer, by Capt. Giddings:—Bombay is the "Queen City" of the East; a truly magnificent metropolis, and up-to-date in every respect, with a hotel—the Taj Mahal—that is famous throughout the world.

The city is built on an island, and is connected to the mainland by an artificial causeway. I wish I could depict so that you could realize the splendor of a street scene in Bombay as it first breaks upon the gaze of the traveler—Mohammedans, Parsis, Hindus in gay garb— Well—you will have to take my word for it, and perhaps you soon will see it.

Bombay is fairly pleasant between November and March; the remainder of the year it is very hot and muggy. I am sorry you made your questions so general; you must realize that it would take many, many pages to describe Bombay in its entirety.

Murray's "Guide to India" is a splendid book. I am afraid I do not know where you can procure it.

LOST TRAILS

Note—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

THE following have been inquired for in either the December 30th, 1923, or January 20th, 1924, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine:

BASSETT, GEORGE; Buffett, Captain James; Canfield, Mary and Charles; Chislom, Robert; Daker, C. C.; Davidson, Alexander; Fessenden, Robert; Gerrarde, A. C.; Harding, Samuel Merton or A. C. Ardell; Hargus, Claude; Hart, Henry S.; Hogan, R. M.; Jennings, Joe; Leider, Joseph; Loomis, Albert B.; Loper, Fred; Martin, Neely; O'Connor, John; O'Connor, Stephen; Raymond, Fred; Richards, Charles; Schecter, S. M.; Sheehan, Marvin; Slinwinski, Stanley J.; Sly, George; Stafford, George; Southwick, Alfred Whales; Ureta, Raul Morales; Vincent, Ted; Vitie, Alexander M.; Wolff, Chris.; Wonderly, George W.

MISCELLANEOUS—Buck; Hughie; Lambert.

OGDEN, CARL M. Letters being held.

SOWDEN, FRANCIS. Age fifteen. Last seen near home on Vernier Road near Lake Shore Drive, Grosse Pointe, Mich., morning of June 14th, 1923, riding bicycle—hand-painted bright red. Light hair, blue eyes, eyebrows rough and sandy, teeth large and overlapped, height five and one-half feet, weight one hundred and twenty pounds—wore brown mix knickerbocker suit, green mix cap, Crowley Milner, Detroit, officers' brown Army shoes, black stockings. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address Mrs. E. L. Van Assche, 84 Vernier Road, Grosse Pointe Shores, Mich.

DAVIS, LESTER. Last heard of was in Quapah, Oklahoma, in 1917. Age thirty-seven years, height six feet, weight about one hundred and seventy pounds, brown eyes and black hair. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address Mrs. Emma Davis, 521 South Main St., Somerset, Ky.

GISTASON, JACOB. Last heard of in Benson, Wis., in October, 1919. Age thirty-one years, height five feet ten inches, weight one hundred and eighty pounds, red hair, blue eyes. Any information will be appreciated.—Adress Mrs. Rosa Gillies, 619 Agnes St., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Can.

LAMBERT, EDWIN. Last heard of in New York City in 1918 in the B. O. A. Any information will be appreciated.—Adress Frank R. Day, 41 Canal St., Schuylkill Haven, Pa.

I WOULD be pleased to hear from any one in the Zipperlen family.—Address Pvt. Henry Z. Zipperlen, Co. C 1st Engineers U. S. A., Camp Lewis, Wash.

ALLAN, ALBERT VICTOR. Resident of Edinburgh, Scotland. Came out to the Canadian Bank of Commerce, Lethbridge, Alberta in 1909. Left the Bank in 1910. Height about six feet, four inches, dark brown hair, blue eyes, age twenty-nine years. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address Dorothy Allan, 414 6th Ave., West, Vancouver, B. C.

GOSS, WILLIE. Heard you were in Ireland last summer. Write your brother. Something important.—Address Fred Goss, 71 North St., Anderston, Glasgow.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 30th and July 30th issues of Adventure, and a list of unclaimed mail will be published in the last issue of each month.

E. N. T. G. Neville do write. Mother is worrying about you. Dad is now with us.—Whittier, Calif.

HILLERBY, ROBERT J. Last heard of in 1921 in Smithers, British Columbia, where he had a tailorshop. A rumor reported him leaving there for South America. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address Mrs. E. A. Allen, 606 E. First St., Monroe, Michigan.

HAGEN, AUGUST (Gust). Born 1880. Last heard from in Crossby, Montana, in 1913. Have news from your sister Gunda in Norway. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Arthur L. Halvorsen, 119 West Front St., Rawlins, Wyo.

KUBIK, CHARLES J. Last heard of in the West. Age about thirty-five years, brown hair, light blue eyes, short and stocky build. Has three fingers disfigured on one hand. Mother is ill in Northamton Hospital. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address Mrs. Anna E. Chandler, 91 Old Bridge St., West Springfield, Mass.

STASSI, JOHN. Last heard from in Rotterdam. Was radio operator on S.S. *Eastern Light.* Please communicate with Gilson Willets, Radio Engineer, Station WOC, Palmer School of Chiropractic, Davenport, Iowa.

SIDEL, AL. Last seen in Corinto, Nicaragua. Was radio operator on a Pacific Mail boat. All letters to you returned. Communicate with Gilson Willets, Radio Engineer, Radiophone Station WOC, Palmer School of Chiropractic, Davenport, Iowa.

PAXTON, CHRISTER H. Last heard from in Manila, January, 1923, believed to have gone to Australia. Age about twenty-five, height five feet 7 inches, weight about one hundred and fifty pounds, gray eyes and dark brown hair. An interesting proposal awaits you.—Address Robert T. Kelly, Gen. Del., San Francisco, Calif.

A COMPLETE list of unclaimed mail will be published in December 30th and June 30th issues of Adventure.

J. W. H. JACK. Am worried and waiting for some word from you. Let me know where you are. If you need money I have it. Please write. You know the address. —"Betts," Gen. Del.

LEROUGE, HARRY. Last seen between Kansas City and St. Louis, on the Missouri River, February, 1923. Late master of the sloop *Bermuda Maid III.* Any information will be appreciated.—Address J. C. Ward, 1831 E. 17th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

FELLOW shipmates and gobs who were in Barracks 948 East, Company 670, Regiment 9, in Camp Farragut, Great Lakes, Ill., during January 1919 or in the Gunners Mate School, Barracks C, Company A, Regiment 11, Main Station, Great Lakes Naval Training Station, Great Lakes, Ill., during February and March 1919, or in Unit 17 North, U. S. Naval Hospital, Great Lakes, Ill., during April 1919, are asked to write to a disabled gob.—Address Laurence Hyde, 3324 Aldrich Ave., South Minneapolis, Minn.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

HOLLOWAY, HEMER M. Please write.—Address G. S. Fitzmaurice, Box 573, Prescott, Arizona.

MATTSON, JOHN H. Last heard of at sea aboard the S.S. *Anten* (Swedish). Now believed to be in California. A letter to his mother, brothers and sisters would be appreciated.—Address Mrs. Mary Mattson, 232 Doty St., Fond du Lac, Wis.

OTTERSON, THOMAS JAMES. Resident of America St., Phila., Pa., about thirty-three years ago. Letters sent were returned. Also would be glad to hear from cousins, also named Otterson, were in Montreal, Canada. Any information regarding either of these parties will be appreciated.—Address John M. O'Callaghan, Mossman, Queensland, Australia.

CREWS, HERMAN R. Age twenty-five years, weight about one hundred and forty-eight pounds, brown hair. Last heard of was in Los Angeles, Calif., in September, 1922. Any information will be appreciated by his brother. —Address E. J. Crews, U. S. S. *New Mexico.*

WILSON, GEORGE. Last heard of in Portland, Maine, in 1917 or 1918. Marine Engineer. Age about thirty-seven years, height medium. Member of the Municipa-Walkers of Portland, Maine. Any information will be apl preciated.—Address Chas. W. Bailey, 11 Arcade, Lynn, Mass.

LOVETT, WILLIAM NORMAN. Went to Ontario, Canada, about 1911. Joined the Army in 1914. Saw him in January, 1915. Left Manitoba for British Columbia about six months ago. Any information will be appreciated by his mother and brother.—Address Harold S. Lovett, 28 Ermine Road, Chester, England.

THE following names have been inquired for within the past two years. The name of the inquirer can be obtained from this magazine.

ABEL, FRED; Abranna, Westly; Ackern, Horace; Acres, Bert; Adair; Adams, Harry C.; Adams, Lydia, Lethia and Myrtle; Addison; Agnew, Thos. Alford, Jimmie Lee; Allen, George Foy; Allen, Joseph C.; Allen, Prescott C.; Anderson, Abel Pontus; Ansell, Edward Clarence Trelawney; Ansell, Rex; Arbuckle, Louis McLane; Armstrong, Scott H.; Aurthor B. S.; Baglin, Jack; Bailey, Edgar T.; Bailey, Robert W.; Bailey, Robert; Baird, Charles Oliver; Baird, Thomas George; Baker, H. W.; Baker, Halard; Baker, M. Lena; Baker, Wm.; Baker, William H.; Ballard, Dave; Ball, Charles Frederick; Barnard, Ella; Barret, Albert; Barrow, Edward C.; Bartell, C.; Barton, Jas. E.; Basket, Robert; Bateman, Leonard; Bauer, C. J.; Beach, L. A.; Beck, Louis M.; Bell, Tom; Benjamin, James; Benedict, Otis; Bennett, Howard; Bennett, Joseph; Bergin, Bill; Berking, Joe; Berry, C. R.; Berry, Marle E.; Bildog, Morgan; Black, John Jackson; Blain, Harold F.; Blaine, Peggie; Blomstergren, O. V.; Bluewell, James G.; Blum, Albert; Bobonie, George; Boniface, W. J.; Bonnie, L. F.; Bosse, Henry; Bossman, Arthur; Bound, John F.; Bowlly, Charles and John; Boyton, Joseph A.; Bracken, Alva L.; Bradford, Robert & Lewis; Bradley, George Shifler or Joseph Lake; Brady, Frank J.; Brancher, G. W.; Brandon, W. E.; Brassel, John H.; Brautigan, Jack; Bradwell, Clifford; Breeden, Richard O.; Brennan, Jack; Brent, C. G.; Brice, Norman; Bronson, D. D.; Brooks, Dr. Edward; Brown, Carl A.; Brown, Eddie Alford; Brown, Fred A. and Mary; Brown, Geo. C.; Bensinger, Alf; Louis, Gus; Brown, Miss Josephine; Brown, Mary; Brown, Wm.; Brune, Frank; Buckley, Thomas; Bunch, William S.; Burke, James; Burke, Ray; Burnett, Thos.; Burns, Harry; Burns, William; Burg, Louis A.; Burton, Bob; Burton, Thomas E.; Bush, Henry; Bushard, Wilfred; Cabaniss, Harvey; Campbell, Fred C.; Cannon, Lewis Marion; Carley, M. R.; Carroll, Arden A.; Carter, J. P.; Carver, Bernard R.; Carter, Nick and Chas. Schaub; Case, Don; Cassidy, John Thomas; Cawley, Charles; Chamberos, Onesirne; Chapin, E. W.; Chapline, Clyde; Chapman, Frederick Wilson; Childers, Theodore R.; Christian, Elam; Christian, Olive; Clapp, Mrs. Nellie; Clark, Edwin E.; Cleland, Herbert; Cleveland, Edward or Harry; Cline, Charles; Clingham, Charles; Cloud, Charles; Clyde, Lewis; Coffman, Ralph B.; Coffin, Harry or Edward; Cohen, Alf E.; Colam, Frank Howe; Coleman, Anna Mae and Eva Verline; Collins, Carter; Company "M" 23rd Infantry; Conklin, Buhl Mr. & Mrs.; Conlton, Mrs.; Conner, Justin Chas.; Conoly, Pat; Conrad, Ira L.; Conway, Charles LeRoy; Cook, Frank; Cook, "Mano" or R. M. Cook; Corley, Charles; Cornish, Charles, Jr.; Coutant, Fred I.; Cox, Sherman W. and Austin; Craft, Felix Werner; Craft, Mrs. Harriett; Crane, E.; Crispt, Lizzie; Croad, James; Curran, Patrick; Curtis, Jas. R.; Damon, George B.; Daneker, John Lee; Dates, Alfred Thomas; Davis, Andrew Lester; Davis, Aron and Familey; Davis, F.; Davis, Harry Bean; Davis, Mrs. Nora Brazille; Davies, John Kirker; Day, George E.; Dayve, Edward C.; Deady, John; De Bruyeker Valentino; De Con, John H.; Delmas, Nick; Delamater, Frank C.; DeMoss, Bob; Dempsey, Ray; Denham, Walter E.; Dennehy, Timothy; Dennis, John A.; Desparios, Roy B.; De Vaile, Louis; Devere, Raymond; De Yattos, Harry Burton; Dickard, Vernon; Dickman, Sgt.; Dickson, Ted, Jr.; Donohue, Bill; Donahue, Thomas F.; Donohew, Mrs. Gertrude; Doyle, Mrs. Eddie; Dow, Edmund F.; Drake, Elmer; Drewes, Harold V.; Driver, Lily May; Dubois, Joe; Duckworth, John; Dunn, Paul A.; Dural, Mrs. A.; Duva, Sven; Earl, Allen; Eberhardt, Sarah and Virginia; Ebery, Gordon; Echols, Ray; Economu, August; Econnonui August A.; Edens, Fred Clark; Edwards, Thomas Herbert and Laura and Margaret; Ehrlich, Oscar; Elam, Richard; Ellis, Walter S.; Els; Ennis, Henry; Entwissle, Martha; Estes, Bill Adams; Eyles, Emil F.; Estes, L. B.; Evans, James Booth; Fallon, Frank; Farmer, Frank D.; Farss, Ellis G.; Farwell, Frank J. or Mack; Fausler, J. P.; Felingham, Fred L.; File, James; Finn, Huck; Finnegan, Joseph Patrick; Fisherman, Allen Gonlda; Fitzpatrick, John F.; Fleming, Cyrus; Flye, Vernon F.; Ford, Harry; Forde, Joseph Patrick; Forman, J. B.; Foster, Donald A.; Foster, H. B.; Foster, Lenora Miss; Fowler, M. R.; Franklin, B. G.; Fraser, Alexander; Fraser, James Ogilvie; Frazer, John George; Fredericksen, Frank R.; French, Dewight; Fromme, Harr K.; Frost, James & J. Hopping Frost; Fuller, W. J.; Furtodo, Mary; Gabelle, James; Garcia, Julian, James Wing and Guy Hunter; Gardner, Charles H.; Gardner, John; Gardner, H. Belden; Gatlyn; Gelston, Rodney S.; Gerrotsen, Gerritt; Gevert, Richard; Gholston, Jabez Gileon; Gilday, John E.; Gilday, John; Gildewell, R. R.; Gleason, John J.; Glenn, Bowdin; Goldie, Joe or John; Goodson, Clarence Eugene; Gorton, Roma S.; Gould, Jay K.; Gould, Terry P.; Gowder, Clarence Milton; Grady, Mrs. Nellie; Graham, Mrs. Mary; Graham, Edna Mary and Willie Leon; Graham, L. B.; Grant, Carl L.; Grant, L. S.; Grasme, Erwin; Graves, James Franklin; Graves, Dr. George C.; Gray, Harry; Greene, Cecil; Green, C. O.; Griffin, Earl or Mother; Griffith, Arthur Frederick or William; Gwilliam, John Lodge; Haberly, Francis K. & Dr. S. S. Haberly; Haertel, Art; Hall, Hill and Valentine; Haigh, Mason C.; Haigh, Ward Percy; Hall, C. J.; Hall, John, Pvt. or Sgt.; Hall, Dr. Lamar; Hamilton, G. A.; Hankins, O. D.; Hanks, Marion R.; Hannigan, Pat; Hansl, Procter, Jr.; Happy, Jack; Harding, Samuel Merton; Harper, Walter A.; Harriman, Robert Clayton; Harries, Hugh M.; Harrison, Lee; Harsell, B. L.; Hart, Allan J.; Hartman, G.; Harty, William; Hasson, Earl Stewart; Hauck, George; Haydon, William Jackson; Hayes, Frank F.; Haynie, Thomas Sexton; Hays or Hayer, Conrad; Hazelton, V. J.; Hazzard, Herbert; Heaton, Maurrice; Herbert, N. A.; Henderson, A. F.; Henderson, Helen; Hennessy, J. M.; Hennon, Ralph; Herbert, N. A.; Herrington, Ernest Chester Joseph Forest, Roy Ray, and Philip Maitland; Hetzel, Claude LeRoy; Hickey, James; Hicks, Ester; Hicks, Marien; Hidinger, Leonard L.; Hindes, George; Hinds, George; Hines, Jack C.; Hintz, Harry; Hirtle, Reginald; Hitter, "Flip"; Hodges, Sebastian; Hoffman, Paul; Hoffman, William; Hogue, Clyde; Hollman, Harry and Krough, John; Holly, Geo. or Joe; Hood, Herbert James; Hoover, Will and Carson; Hopper, Cal B.; Hough, T. J.; Howard, George; Howard, Jack S.; Hubbs, James; Hucht, August Thomas; Huff, Ray and sister Vera; Huffman, Carl; Hughes, Geo. H.; Hughes, Johnnie; Hukill, Eugene S.; Humiston; Hundley, R. L.; Hunt, Robert; Hurley, James; Hutler, Reginald; Irvine, Thomas M.; Irving, James D.; Jacks, Milton; Jackson, Howard; Jackson, Jack H.; Jacques, Frank L.; Jakubovsky, Joseph and Vidikovsky Kasimir; Jenkins, Chas. Westley; Jensen, Victor; John R.; Johnson, Bill; Johnson, Dercy and William; Johnson, Jefferson Randolph; Johnson, Nellie; Johnson, Lawrence R.; Johnson, Norman LeRoy; Johnson, O. W.; Johnston, Robert Gordon; Jones, A.; Jones, Harry; Jones, Oscar; Jolley, Major Wade; Jorkinson, L.; Jury, W. E.; Kaczynska, Gus; Kahl, Harry; Karnatz, "Chick"; Kasimir, Haji; Kavanagh, John; Kavanagh, Ned & E. E. Egan; Kavash, Samuel; Kearns, Gertrude; Keenan, Wm.; Keene, Tom; Keim, Albert; Kelly, Francis A.; Kennedy, Norman; Kenner, A. W., Kenny, Albert; Kenney, Joe; Kenny, D. W.; Kepner, Mrs. Edith; Kerkling, Herbert E.; Kerr, Jack; Key, Maggie; Klein, Blackie; Knight, W. V.; Kilian, Gustave; Kimmis, Bruce; King, Phillips; King, Capt. Billie; Kircher Hugo H.; Kirsch, Michael; Kister, Norval L.; Koyoto, Whitey; Kretoslar, Jerry; Krone, Joseph; Kubid, Charles; Kubik, Charles J.; Kuss, Corp. George A.; Kutchinski, Gustave Adolph; Laird, Lawrence Russell; Lamb, Frank; Landers, Morris; Lane, Edward; Lane, James A.; Langshaw, Robert Henry; Lantis, Wesley; La Porte, Harry; Larsen, George Waldo; Latchford, Ed.; Layton, Clyde; Lee, John; Lee, Preston; LeEffe, Jack; Leider, Dolores; Lester; Leuzkee, Gottlieb; Fritz; Levine, Dave; Lewey, Harry P.; Lewis, Arthur C.; Lewis, Oscar; Lewis, William J.; Lieder, Joseph; Linds, Ralph; Lindsay, Willard; Lindsay, Percy; Lipesey Alex; Livingston, Sam L.; Lobber, Mrs. Eva; Locke, Charles E.; Lockwood, Robt. L.; Luther, Robert; LuValle, Alvin; Lyman, Robert; Lysoe, Meta M.; McCabe, Joe R.;

McCarthy, R. N.; McCallister, Wm. R.; McKay, Earl; McCloud, John Henry; McConnell, John & May; McCulloch, Milan E.; McCune, Thomas; McCurley, T. J.; McCutcheon, Ernest; McDevitt, Andrew John; McDevitt, Hugh; McFeat, Edward George; McFee or Goodier; McGee, Martin; McGovern, James and Joseph; McGovern, Thomas P.; McGuire, Benjamin; McGuire, Charles; McIver, Lawrence; McKeefery, Frank J.; McLaughlin, Stewart H.; McLauren, Joe; McNamee, Joseph T.; McManus Roderick P.; McNabb, Fred Leo and Ethan; McNally, Patrick and Joe; McNamara, William or William Thomas; McPherson, Norman; McRobert, Charles; McWilliam, Walter; McWilliams, Walter; Macauley or McCauley, Dudley; MacDonald, James F.; MacDonald, Jim; MacDonald, Malcom; Mackeys or Mackie, Louis; Madsen, Louis; Magee, Alfred H. or "Red"; Mahoney, Arthur; Malcolm, Peter; Mally, Ted G.; Malone, Clifford; Maloney, Roger O.; Mills; Manning, Wilard; Mannion, Michael Patrick; Mansfield, Robert Allen; Marlin, Michael Jefferson; Marshall, Delia Arnold; Martin, Nate; Mason, Albert L.; Masters, Mark B.; Mathias, F.; Mauck, Joseph B.; Maule, Harry Almeroco; May, C. B.; May, Mattie Marie; Mayle, Harold B.; Meadows, Madge; Melius, Fred; Mellard, W. Donald; Menard, Patrick; Merz, Alfred; Mesecar, Joseph Alfred; Meyer, Paul F.; Mickle, Frank; Middaugh, Robert Lee; Miller, Mr.; Miller, Charles; Miller, Edward; Miller, George E. or Alberth; Miller, Julius;Mills, Lynden; Milnthorp, John or Henry; Mitchell, Bob; Mitchell, Geo.; Mittler, Edward J.; Moffett, Chauncey; Molewitz, William; Monk, Fred; "Monte" or "Hassayampa"; Moore, Bill; Morris, Walter; Moore, Robert; Morton, William H.; Muller, E.; Muller, Robert F.; Munro, James; Murdaugh, Roy H.; Murphy, Esmond R.; Murphy, Thomas Joseph; Murrays, James; Myers, Mrs.; Napier, Harry; Navarro, Nedra; Nekring, Frederick; Nelson, Adolf; Nelson, G. W.: Nelson, John; Nelson, Milton; Newman, Albert E.; Nichols, Frank; Niman, Samuel; Noll, Mrs. Adam; Noll, Frank; Norton, Walter; O'Brien, John; O'Connor, Daniel; O'Dell, Ancil; O'Dornell, Joseph; O'Donnell, Michael C.; Ogg, John; Olie, Pasquele; Olive, Private Dave W.; Olson, Lawrence T.; Olmstead, Lela Jean; O'Neil, Arthur; O'Neill, Jack; O'Rourke, Larry; Outland, Merritt E.; O'Rourke, Edward; O'Rourke, John; Orvin, W.; O'Toole, John William; Owne, Jack; Pafford, William; Palen, Charles E.; Palmer, Arthur; Parent, Joe; Parker, Willie Larater; Parmeter, John; Passfield, Jack: Farnham, Charlie; Pyle, Sam; Patterson, Frank; Patterson, Tom; Payne, Alfred; Payntey, E. Ware; Pedersen, Carl; Pebbles, Jack; Pelley, Wm. G. A.; Penavin, George; Perry, Ernest F.; Perry, Erbest Leslie; Perry, Robert R.; Perry, Samuel G.; Pharis, Alfred; Plouitz, Lewis; Ponish, Henry; Porter, Edward Beck; Pouers, Mrs. Gertrude; Powell, Jesse; Price, James; Prichard, "Zark" or Walter; Priest, Francis E. or Julia Priest; Prunty, Private Peter; Prusak, Johnnie; Punch, Mary; Pugh, Sidney, Richard; Purdom, Charles Edward; Puthee, Leopold; Puzar, Julius; Quimm, Jasalph; Rahilly, Richard H.; Rasmussen, Holger; Ravens, Arthur; Ravenswood, Edward; Reed, Lucede; Reed, Mrs. M. A.; Reed, Tiffin; Reeves, John R.; Reid, Jack E.; Reiner, Harold; Rehmann, Mathias; Reynolds, "Diamond Joe"; Reynolds, Miss Kattie Agnes; Richards, Cleon; Richards, Frank; Richardson, Howard; Richter, George Alfred; Riddle, Harry; Ridenour, O.; Riffle, C. H.; Riley, Charley; Rippley, L. Eroll; Ritter, Ralph Herbert; Ritey, Richard P.; Roberts, George L.; Rucker, Lulu Williams; Rucker, C. Ryan; Rumpf, George A.; Russell, Juel C.; Russell, Robert Lawrence; Seaf, Erik Algot; Sahlman, Toivo; Sailor, Bob; "Sake," Evan J.; Sammet, Jacob; Samuel, Merton H.; Sargent, John W.; Saxton, Samuel, Hugh, Joshua and Thomas; Schafer, Thelma and Mary; Schaffer, Gabriel; Sciarra, Ben F.; Shannon, Naylor; Sharpe, Cecil; Schmidt, A.; Schrock, Frank J.; Scott, David; Scotts, Cecil; Seabourn; Seagraves, John; Seaton, James Arthur; See, John; Seelye, Lawrence Copeland; Seney, A.; Shepard, Harold; Seril. Frank; Shahane, T. C.; Shaklee, George H.; Shamblin; "Shanghai," Pressey; Sharman, George; Shatto, Powers; Shaw, Robt. E.; Shepard, Harold North; Shirley, Wissiam S.; Shmoll, Edward; Sholes, Sgt. J. J.; Shortiss, James; Shultz, Mrs. Frank; Siebert, Jack; Sigabee, J. A.; Simonsen, Stanley L.; Simpson, Corp. Norman L.; Siple, William B.; Sjoberg, Alex; Skinner, James H.; Slaven, Joe; Slavin, Joseph Patrick; Smeltzer, Bonnie F.; Smigoski, John M.; Smith, Albert Ernest; Smith, Sgt. Albert R.; Smith, Arthur James; Smith, Ben.; Smith, Benjamin F. or "Brady" or "Bradley"; Smith, Bertha Christina; Smith, Charles; Smith, Eddie; Smith, Gordon; Smith, James alias Nicholas Finley; Smith, Lester M., Ex. Sgt., U. S. M. C.; Smythe, Pete; Snyder, "Dutch"; Sond, Viola; Southwick, Alfred Whales; Spaulding, Joseph C.; Specter, or Speck, Mary and Louise; Spence, Edmond Shackleford; Spencer, Raymond; Sprout, Robert H.; Spowage, John; Sramek, J. B.; Starke, James Elbert; Steel, William; Steigerwald, Charles F.; Steinke, Le Roy; Stengel, Michael R.; Stevenson, Pvt. Fred; Stewart, C. J.; Stocker, Ethel C.; Stone, Ted; Stotts, Cecil, Clarence and Charley; Storke, Frances Havens; Streeter, Ray; Stuart, Arthur P.; Stubbs, Ralphy; Styles, Virgil; Swann, F. W.; Swauick, John Joseph; Swiatkowski, William J.; Sweeney, E. J.; Talbott, Lizzie; Tarply, Thomas E.; Tate, Thomas; Taylor, Milton James; Taylor, Jimps; Teague, Oscar R.; Teeter, John Pedro; Thomas, David L.; Thomas, Luther; Thompson, Charles; Thompson, Irvin L.; Thompson, Clarence Lee; Thornton, Walter; Timmel, Ed.; Tisdale, Clark; Todd, R. Hubert; Tokas, Basil; Tolly, Frank; Traynor, W. J. H.; Trowbridge, Frederick Cooke; Truffer, Frank; Turbeville, Clem; Turner, John; Tucker, James Walter; Ubil, George Durbro; Updegraff, Pvt. Frank; Vanderbeck, Andrew W.; Vanderpool, Martha, Elizabeth, Nancy, Christie, Mary, Willis, Joe and Johnnie; Van Deusen, William and Mrs. Belle Van Deusen; Van Dyke, Peter; Vance, John Raymond; Vaughn, Ernestine; Vaughan, Jas.; Valdez, Alex; Via, Dellman H.; Vivian, Howard; Wagoner, Harry R.; Wagner, Henry A.; Walker, Oscar Newland; Wall, Frank; Wade, Robert; Walsh, Matthew J.; Walton, Kenneth; Wammack, Ray; Ward, Walter C.; Washbaord, Tommy; Washburn, Hugh E.; Webber, William; Weimer, Jacob; Weathers, Christena; Wells, Fred S.; Wendell, Warren; Westhaver, P.; West, Max; White, Charles; Whitefoot, Jack; Whitlatch, James Monroe; Wikstrom, Ralph Ronald Ludwig; Williams, Claude; Williams, George Bert; Williams, Joe; Williams, Reginald Bobbitt; Wilson, Samuel William; Willet, Jas. S.; Williams, Earl; Williams, Rufus; Wickroy, Allen Sigal; Wilson, Robt. C.; Wilde, Ted; Wild, Harry; Wigley, August; Williams, George C.; Williams, Fitz; Wilson, Pvt. Edgar; Wilson, Frank C.; Wilmington, Rev. A W., Williams, Harry H.; Wilson, Anna, Margaret and Edward; Wilburth, Harry; Williams, Patrick; Wilcox, Arthur M.; Willis, Sam; Wilson, John P.; Winnie, George; Wirt, G. William; Wislin, Joseph and Harry; Wood, Carl Herbert; Wood, Marion; Wood, Theodore; Wolff, Albert; Womble, Benjamin Franklin; Wooding, W. A.; Woodruff, Mary L.; Woodus, T. M.; Woolery or Wickwire family; Wortley, J. R.; Wright, Cecil; Wray, Albert L.; Wynne, Herbert; Young, Joy; Yagner, Sam; Young, Derony; Zitman, Eddie and Joe Foley.

MISCELLANEOUS—Want to hear from any of the boys who served with signal corps in Mexico or at Columbus, New Mexico, during the Punitive Expedition 1916-1917 and also from any of the boys who served at March Field, Riverside, Calif., during the war. Alibi, John or any member of the Spruce Division that worked with me on bridge either in Oregon or Washington in 85 sqd., 104 sqd., 42 sqd. Please Bob and Ruby write to your friends. Please write to your old pal Dutch; N. S. L.; would like to hear from the Sgt. of Co. K of the Infantry who was in France with me after the Armistice was signed; U. S. S. *Truxtun's Crew*, 1911, James Kirby, W. T. Eugene Frye, Fir. cl., Pete Crawford, Fir. cl., or any one who knew "Daddy" Lantz in 1911-12; Daddy we want to hear from you. Diana and Jackie boy; "Leary," "Dutch" Rhyne, Kirck, "Tug" Wilson, Haines and all the rest of the gang who graduated from U. S. Navy Yeoman School, Newport, Rhode Island, Dec. 23, 1916; Sgt. Pat Vaughn, Captain Baker or any member of Convalescent Camp Number Two or of Base Hospitals 16-66-17-18 between Sept. and Nov. 1918. Would like to hear from comrades who served in Troop B, 12th Cavalry from 1901 to 1903; My old chums of the Clover Leaf Club please let me hear from you; J. C. S.; L. W.; Conger, "Yank," Harris, Locke or any A. B.'s of "Buckeye State"; Texas Jack, Slushy, Andy O'Brien, Kelly, Ted Leeds, Mike or any of the crew of the Bowhead Whaling Schooner *Era;* Clarence; Members of 2P A. D. Batt. in Philippines and Q. M. C. Vancouver, Wash.; J. B. L.; Boys of Co. M 167th Rainbow Div.; Co. 1 3rd Batt. Engineers; Caulfield, Michael, Wm. Paasch; James Brett; Marine Guard who served on U. S. S., N. C., 1908-1911; Boys who worked on Caro Ranches in Wyoming in the eighties; Paul; Men who served on sub-chaser No. 37 from Christmas 1918 to May 1st, 1919; Soldiers of Former 324th Aux. Remont Sta., Waco, Texas; Evesharn, Tommy; Hart, Mat; Warren, A. J.; Moffett; Bounafon or any dynamiters who were shipmates with "Tramp" Rogers West Coast 1910-14; W. M. C.; Boys that served in France Co. B. & C 9th Field Signal Battalion; Murriel; Potter, A and any one who served in the 7th U. S. Cavalry from 1872 until 1881; J. G. W.; Number One R 724,942; Relatives of Charles Merinar; armed guard crew on S. S. *Sobral* 1918; Bob; former member of Batt. B. 149th F. A. Rainbow Div.; O. W. R.; Bennetts; Shipmates of S. S. *Carlton* and *Farragut;* Shipmates on U. S. S. *Lakeside*; Capt. Mooney, Lt. Hoffman, Ensigns Osburn, Green and Rarrabee; Frank; Shipmates on U. S. S. *Balch* in 1918 who knew Elza Newman; Ex-soldiers who served under Sgt. Edwin Swain, 354 Bakery Co., St. Aignan A. E. F., France; Lonergan, Sgt. Patrick, Meehan, Jack or any boys of Co. C 29th Inf.; Bill; C. L. W. of Ft. Clayton, Panama; "Shun" Duke Shelton, Victor Alvin, Moe Henery Devlin (97) Kelley, Lynch (Honolulu) fall out and report W. A. B.; Will all men who served overseas with the 4th Canadian

Inf. Batt. please send names and addresses to Capt. W. L. Gibson, 50 James St., S. Hamilton, Ont., Can.; W. V. M.; Boster brothers; Helen, H.; Howard; Peter Joe; F. W. D.; Men who served under Casomi in C. A. and lower Mexico and boys who were with me in Cape Town, South Africa; Parents of George Caldwell; Any one who was in Militia Div. Q. M. C., Base Hospital, Camp Jackson, S. C.; Hefley, Linnerman, Friday, Hardy, Rainbolt, McClellan, Creighton or any of the gang that rode the Number Seven and Number Eleven cars in 1918 and 1919; Any of the old gang who were in Co. A 40th Inf. from July 1917 to Jan. 18, 1919, Co. K. 11th Inf. U. S. A.; descendants of Michael E. McCaffrey; descendants of John Walsh; gang who served in the Ambulance Co. No. 8 Corzal, Canal Zone 1915 to 1921; Members of Coast Guard *Cotter*, *Apache* or *Yamacran* who served during 1919; also members of crew of the shipping board steamer *Colingworth* who were aboard at time of salvaging of the S.S. *West Waoneke*; relatives of Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Wilkey; Tickle; boys of U. S. S. *Rondo;* Cal.; Ex-members of battery A 3rd Batt.; Hannigan, Joe, Mang, Freddy; Parlen, Pinky, McCarthy or any of the boys who worked for the S. P. U. at Camp Merritt, N. J., summer of 1919; relatives of Eslick's or Pierce's who settled in Webster and Polk counties, Iowa about 1850; R. E. H.; anyone who saw the accident of the Harry Wright Amusement Co. Boat *Marion* a few miles below Helena, Ark., on the Mississippi River April 26th, 1908; Bob; Dubs; Billy; Husband; members of the 14th Batt. R. M. R., Can. Army who was acquainted with Raymond Kearns who died in action Easter Monday, 1917 at Vimq Ridge; sailors who occupied barracks 948 E., Camp Farragut, Great Lakes, Ill., between the dates of Jan. 10, 1919 to Jan. 30, 1919 can help a disabled gob by writing to Laurence K. Hyde, 3324 Alderick Ave., S. Minneapolis, Minn.; Belegian; Woods, Mrs. and Mr. W. M. and daughter Fannie May and son Lee; descendants of Desire Bourgeois; John; Col. Muerling of the 2nd C. M. M. G. Ede.; 9268; Andy; members of the family of Montgomery whose ancestors lived in Mecklenburg county, N. C., between 1750 and 1800, are requested to communicate with W. V. Montgomery, one Madison Ave., N. Y. C., Cunningham heirs of Boston, Mass., can be located by writing to J. C. Harriss, 911 Furnier St., Ft. Worth, Texas; "Happy" letters addressed to you at last address returned, write me; Martin Purcell and Thomas Quigley; members of Co. E or Headquarters Co. 166th Inf. 42nd Div. during war; members of Det. Q. M. C. Fort Clark, Texas, during 1919-1920 are requested to write to one of the old boys; would like to hear from some of his shipmates aboard the S. S. *Kimta* after we left Antwerp, Belgium, in Dec. 1919; "*Rondo* Seadogo Ahoy," "Pop" Polinkas, "Tex" Russell, "Dad" Hodge and any other of the *Rondo* crew also shipmates of the tug-boats *Penobscot*, *Nahant or Conestago* and mates of Co. F 2nd Ala. Inf.; Boys of troop "G" and 7th Cavalry; members of 51st Aero Squadron, Mineola; Tynn, G. M. Blais, Douglas; Patten S. S. *Osborne*, C. E. Card, Sam; O'Rielly, E. M. and others who knew me in Bermuda.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

FEBRUARY 20TH ISSUE

Besides the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE BEST DEFENSE *John Webb*
The man who wouldn't stay licked.

"THE PRESIDENT" *John Eyton*
An old, tremendous fish and his strange Food Madness.

PORTO BELLO GOLD A Five-Part Story Part II
A gentleman pirate and his Jacobite scheme. *Arthur D. Howden Smith*

DOWN DIM PASSAGES *Sidney Herschel Small*
Death sat on the doorstep when the Fighting Priest arrived.

A PATHFINDER WITHOUT FAME An Article *Michael J. Phillips*
The winning of California.

FOR THE HONOR OF THE CLOTH An Off-the-Trail Story*
The "Apple-Sauce King"—and a matter of burial. *Patterson James*

THE GILA KID *E. S. Pladwell*
What happened when a man left his partner to die of thirst.

**See note at bottom of first contents page.*

Still Farther Ahead

IN THE three issues following the next there will be *long stories* by Arthur O. Friel, Gordon Young, L. Patrick Greene, Kingsley Moses, Barry Scobee, George Brydges Rodney, J. D. Newsom, Bill Adams, W. C. Tuttle, Gordon MacCreagh and Arthur D. Howden Smith; and short stories by J. Allan Dunn, Georges Surdez, Gordon Young, Royce Brier, John T. Rowland, H. C. Bailey, Frederic Moore, William Byron Mowery, F. St. Mars, and others—stories of the Amazon, the South Seas, the West, the Spanish Main, Africa, Labrador, Peru, medieval France—the sea, the desert and the jungle—buccaneers, cowboys, sailors, Indians and knights at arms—of adventurers the world around.

Williams'
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.
J. B. WILLIAMS CO.

Can you do this with your Shaving Cream Cap—

or do you do this?

YOU know how loose caps will slip through your fingers just when minutes are most precious. You can't lose the Williams' cap. It's always on—*hinged* on. And the tube hangs on.

Time-saver though the hinged cap is—it is a detail for speed compared with the lather. Williams' Shaving Cream bulks *instantly* into rich, busy lather—not suds. This lather so softens and lubricates your skin that the razor seems to "glide" the hairs off. And besides being a faster beard-softener, it has a decidedly beneficial effect on the skin.

Williams' is white and absolutely pure. It contains no coloring matter whatsoever. Truly, you will find it the perfect cream in the perfect container.

THE J. B. WILLIAMS COMPANY, Glastonbury, Conn.
Made in Canada at Montreal, by The J. B. Williams Co., Ltd

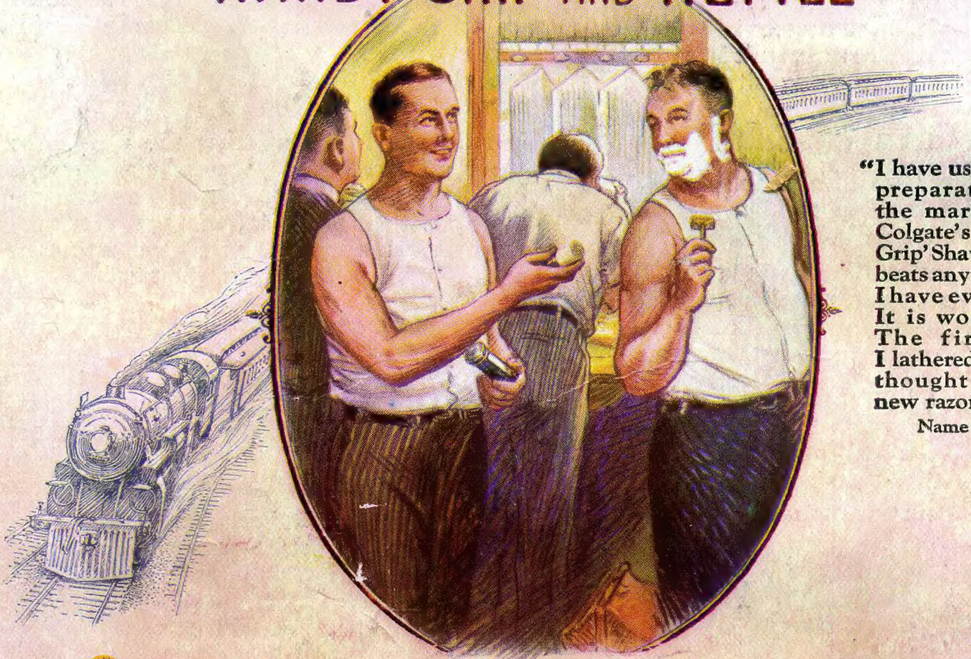
For men who prefer the stick, Williams' Doublecap (absolutely new) and Williams' Holder Top Stick (the original holder stick) give the genuine Williams' in the most convenient stick forms. There are Re loads for both.

Williams'
Shaving Cream

COLGATE'S

Shaving Stick

"HANDY GRIP" AND REFILL



"I have used all the preparations on the market, and Colgate's 'Handy Grip' Shaving Stick beats anything else I have ever tried. It is wonderful. The first time I lathered with it I thought I had a new razor."

Name on request.

Why Wear Bristles Away from Home?

Wherever you travel you will find that Colgate's "Handy Grip" Shaving Stick is used by most men who appreciate the importance of shaving every morning.

There are good reasons for their preference.

With hot water or cold, with soft water or hard, Colgate's makes a copious, fragrant lather which softens the beard *at the base*, where the razor's work is done. It makes shaving easy, and leaves the face cool and refreshed.

Colgate's "Handy Grip" Shaving Stick can be packed easily and safely. The metal case prevents crushing or smearing.

A New York business man, whose name will be given on request, writes us that he got 551 shaves out of one "Handy Grip" Shaving Stick. It is not uncommon for a Colgate Shaving Stick to last a year or more in daily use.

COLGATE & CO. *Established 1806* NEW YORK

NOTE — Our long experience and great facilities enable us to make marvelous shaving preparations, including cream, powder, cake soap, and sticks. We can, therefore, give you the impartial assurance that Colgate's "Handy Grip" Shaving Stick is the last word in shaving comfort, convenience and economy.

HANDY GRIP
COLGATE & CO
SHAVING STICK